

**THE ADMINISTRATION OF INSANITY IN EAST LONDON
1800-1870**

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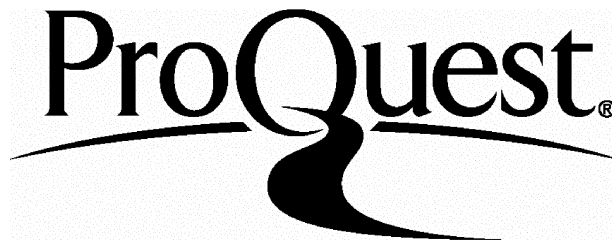
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ABSTRACT

The policies and operational management practices for mentally dependent people devised by the Parish Vestry Trustees of the Poor and the Boards of Guardians in East London are examined for the period 1800 to 1870. The study is set within the rapidly changing socio-demographic context of an increasingly overcrowded, impoverished, mobile local population comprising the parishes in the Tower Division of the Ossulstone Hundred and for the old poor law period, the City of London. Documentary sources include the records of the Vestries, Trustees and Overseers of the Poor, the Boards of Guardians, the archives of the County Lunatic Asylums at Hanwell and Colney Hatch, contemporary records of the Metropolitan and later national Commissioners in Lunacy, the Poor Law Commission and its successor the Poor Law Board and local archival materials from the Borough Archives of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

A wealth of institutions for the insane had been established locally in the eighteenth century and earlier. Large privately owned 'pauper lunatic asylums' and huge pauper farms determined an institutional solution to managing insanity at an earlier date than was generally the case elsewhere in England. The old poor law period was characterised by a flexible, individual approach to managing the insane using a 'mixed economy' of private and public placements, the parishes showing considerable variation in their choice of placement. This diversity of approach between neighbouring districts of Boards of Guardians continued after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, there being substantial continuity of practice before and after the Act in some districts.

Financial and legal incentives gradually changed the placement policies of the Guardians, encouraging the use of the public asylums. Relations between the County Asylums and the Guardians, seen through the negotiations between Guardians' officers, doctors and asylum staff, were often conducted through the language of dangerousness and the need to choose the most economic alternative. The Commissioners in Lunacy and the Poor Law Commissioners had only a modest impact on local policy and quality of local provision in workhouses but the culture of non-restraint and the moral stance of the Lunacy Commissioners and Hanwell Asylum may have influenced some Guardians' policies. The Guardians lost much of their responsibility for the care of the insane when the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 gave birth to the Metropolitan Asylums Board and the new imbecile asylums. It is argued that the move away from local, individual planning and purchasing for each case to centralised, comprehensive planning for categories of classified paupers was not necessarily in the best interests of insane paupers.

FOREWORD and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I was training in psychiatry and geriatric medicine in North and East London in the 1970s, I found that although I was nominally attached to prestigious teaching hospitals, the beds for aged and mentally ill patients were without exception in secondary hospitals that had started life as workhouses, workhouse infirmaries, Metropolitan Asylums Board hospitals and LCC asylums. My interest in these institutions and the people who worked in them began on bored nights on call, exploring the basements, back stairs and forgotten archives. Returning to East London as an administrator after a gap of 15 years, during which time I had been an academic, health service manager and government Commissioner, I found the pattern of institutions in 'my patch' almost unchanged. My 'new' office was in the old 'workhouse infirmary wing' at St Leonard's Hospital, the former Shoreditch Workhouse, where Dr Arthur Morris, a noted local medical historian, had been medical superintendent in the 1950s. Morris's knowledge of the early history of St Leonard's and of the numerous private madhouses nearby has been both an inspiration and a responsibility. The claustrophobic geography of these institutions fascinated Morris and was the starting point for my own study of the work of our administrative predecessors, the East London Parish Trustees and Guardians of the Poor.

A novice explorer needs a guide and good companion and there could be no finer than Professor Roy Porter, my supervisor. His company alone would have been sufficient to retain my enthusiasm for the task. He has taught me to reflect as well as to document, to read what I would formerly have tossed aside. The journey has been above all the best fun and my expression of thanks to him is bound to be inadequate. Thanks are also due to the community of social historians who have been so generous with their time and advice, both at the Wellcome Institute and further afield. There are too many to mention everyone but Andrea Tanner, Ruth Richardson, Nick Hervey, Jo Melling and Peter Bartlett have been exceptionally encouraging. I have been assisted generously by the archivists at the London Metropolitan Archive, the Guildhall Library and Tower Hamlets Archive but specially want to thank David Mander and his team at Hackney Archive, Robert Leon at St Luke's Woodside and Mrs Priscilla Mitchell for their enthusiasm and practical help. Finally, numerous Health Service managers in East London have unearthed old plans and drawings, taken me on tours of the oldest parts of their hospitals and accompanied me 'asylum-hunting'. I am grateful for their cheerful if sometimes puzzled indulgence.

Elaine Murphy

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Chapter 1: Managing Insanity in East London: the Administrative Problem

James Lock, a man in his late 60s, came into Stepney Union's Mile End workhouse in the winter of 1838. This is Mr Warren, the Relieving Officer's account:¹

On the 3 December while the Relieving Officer happened to be at the residence of the medical officer Mr Story on other business, a message was brought requiring the immediate attendance of the latter upon a man in Devonshire Street supposed to be insane. Both officers immediately attended and found James Lock sitting by the fire. It seems he had gone to the necessary and having stopped long his daughter went to look for him and found him lying on the stairs in the yard quite exhausted from cold.

He was promptly removed to the workhouse where every attention was paid to him until his death on the 5 December upon which a coroner's inquest was held at the insistence of the Master of the workhouse. The daughter is understood to be in receipt of £50 per annum.

The only clothing he had on him at the time was a coat and one shoe and it would seem he was in the habit of going about almost in a state of nudity. It was a respectable sort of house but there was no vestige of furniture in his room except a little flock in one corner although his daughter is understood to be in receipt of £50 per annum. The Relieving Officer adds that he considered it safer to remove him at once to the workhouse than to trust him to the care of the daughter who by the accounts given her by her neighbours, appears to be addicted to drinking.

One hundred and sixty years later, the local Stepney community psychiatrist would find this situation familiar. He would accompany the 'area social worker' on a 'domiciliary visit'. They would probably decide to admit confused James Lock to the local institution just as Mr Warren and Mr Story did and as it happens, to the very same institution in Bancroft Road, now called Mile End Hospital. Day to day clinical practice in mental health services today is rooted in operational systems that were established by the poor law authorities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. How did the system work? What were the responsible authorities trying to achieve? This thesis aims to answer those questions by examining how public policy for the care of mentally disordered people was formulated and implemented by the responsible local authorities and their staff during the nineteenth century in the East End of London, from 1800 to 1871.

James Lock was one of 100 or so Stepney Union admissions per year for mental disorder in the 1830s and 40's for what was classified as lunacy or idiocy. Most were younger, most survived admission to the workhouse to be cared for in the House or sent on to one of a number of institutions. Across East London there were about 600 such admissions every year. They were officially designated pauper lunatics because only paupers were eligible to receive financial benefit or care from the parish or union but while many were destitute 'real' paupers within the meaning of the poor law; many were not, at least at the outset. Lock's daughter had a reasonable income but was incapable of her father's care. Lock was admitted to the workhouse because that was the primary place of removal for all cases needing round-the-clock care arising from a medical or social emergency.

If there is one theme or service principle that links the care of mentally disordered people in the 20th century to that of their 19th, 18th and 17th century counterparts right back to 1601 it is the 'catchment area' system. The system whereby a named agency or authority is responsible for determining and paying for the type of care individuals receive in a defined geographical area is necessary when the recipients of care are an unpopular charge on public funds but society through legislation insists that care must be provided. NHS mental health and geriatric medical services have catchment areas; paediatric and surgical services do not! The double yellow lines that mark out the boundaries for which East London and the City Health Authority's mental health services are responsible in 2000 are defined every bit as rigidly as the Acts of Settlement determined which parish should be responsible for the destitute and deranged under the old and new poor laws. These tightly drawn areas are an advantage for the student of social policy since it is possible to identify for a specific geographical patch a responsible public body at local or regional level at all periods over the last four centuries within whose remit an individual fell. The themes which emerge from tracking the administrative practices of local agencies over successive periods in one area are the development of central government agencies, the creation of effective local government, the rise of the publicly employed doctor and the professional local government officer. The impact of the changing administrative context on patients and their families is thrown into relief by a longitudinal study.

From the middle ages until 1948, the care of people with mental disorder who were without personal financial resources, that is the vast majority, were broadly no different from any other group of people dependent on the public purse. Their care or lack of it depended on the system of welfare administration for those unable to provide for themselves. Various Acts of Parliament from 1714 established rules governing the disposal and care of mentally disordered people. The rules were refined through the 18th and 19th centuries and the pattern of institutional provision changed. Nevertheless the responsible public authority for all impotent, dependent groups of people remained throughout the local Poor Law Authority, initially the parish Trustees of the Poor, then later the Boards of Guardians.

The poor law was the administrative rock on which the system of care was constructed. Yet as Walton first pointed ^{out} in 1984,² until recently two other themes dominated the historiography of mental disorder, first that of clinical psychiatry and psychiatrists and second the rise of the Victorian asylum as society's preferred response. The place of the insane in social welfare provision was located by Jones and Scull in their early works within the reforming zeal of the County Magistrates, the mid-Victorian Lunatics Acts and the central inspectorate responsible for policing the acts, the Commissioners in Lunacy.³ In the early 1990s Jones complained that the social history of mental health services had become an "academic minefield", smarting perhaps from Scull's heavyweight criticism of her analysis of events as a story of progress and social enlightenment thwarted by "backsliding, misunderstandings and incompetence".⁴

Scull's "deeply researched and provocative account of the growth of public asylums"⁵ in nineteenth century England, published as *Museums of Madness* in 1979,⁶ attributed the expansion of 'asylumdom' to the emerging commercial market economy and the consequent extrusion of inconvenient non-working people from the mainstream of family and community life. Scull interpreted the annexation of madness by specialist mad-doctors as an unattractive bid for power and status by a group of financially insecure members of a profession still on the threshold of respectability. Looking

back twenty years later, Scull located his early theme bias to his interest in the work of other 'proletarian' historians, Hobsbawm and E P Thompson but acknowledges that his work was stimulated in part by Foucault's brilliant but flawed essays on *Madness and Civilisation*.⁷ Scull's revisionist historical sociology proved to be a red rag to the mainstream British psychiatric bull and to fans of the asylum like Jones, who viewed Scull's interpretation as a challenge to the legitimacy of the psychiatric profession, which of course it was, and a late flowering of the 1960's anti-psychiatry movement, which perhaps it was not.

The effect of Scull's challenge was to provoke further analyses of the meaning of the asylum as a solution to managing derangement, facilitated by the wealth of archival material from the institutions and the county magistracy that administered them.⁸ The literature underplayed the legal and administrative context of the poor law within which lunacy was managed and paid only glancing attention to the influence of the changing role of the State and the growth of nineteenth century government administration.

Porter meanwhile was excavating an earlier seam of eighteenth century evidence, which challenged the notion that the nineteenth century response to madness was discontinuous and different from previous centuries. He rescued the humanity of earlier attempts to care for and cure the mad from the overwhelmingly dismissive accounts of eighteenth century 'care' in medical and historical texts.⁹ Just as importantly though his work reasserted the value of a pragmatic analysis of events in the context of a broader cultural approach. The madman, his family, the parish and the poor law moved centre stage.

Over the past fifteen years however, largely through the work of Bartlett,¹⁰ Wright,¹¹ Smith,¹² and Forsyth and Melling,¹³ the asylum and 'mad-doctors' have been repositioned on the periphery of a target that places the administration of the poor law at its centre. The study reported here supplements this recent literature using materials from a metropolitan geographical patch a world away from Melling's leafy Devon and the Middle England where Bartlett's, Smith's and Wright's studies are set.

In the nineteenth century East London became and remains today the most impoverished urban area in Britain, providing the social context within which human distress and disease could breed high rates of mental disorder. The author confesses however that the main rationale for researching in East London was her familiarity with the geography, the surviving institutions and proximity to the archives. Other geographical areas would have served the purpose of the study satisfactorily although the social context of the eastern parishes, the wealth of surviving records and its unusually rich configuration of institutions perhaps provide sufficient justification for the choice.

The Development of the Poor Law of Lunacy. From the appointment of Overseers of the Poor in 1597 to the formation of the Union Boards of Guardians in the mid-1830s, the unit of public administration for managing the problem of dependent poor people was the parish vestry. Financing, planning, purchasing and monitoring of all types of care for the unemployed, aged or infirm, orphaned or poor children, the slow-witted, the drunkard and the simply feckless, fell to one of 15,000 vestries. The principles of the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, which consolidated all the piecemeal measures passed in the previous half century, remained largely unchanged until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, although its detail was revised. Even the sweeping legislation of 1834 was not so revolutionary as contemporary observers claimed; the principles of vestry responsibility were maintained through the 'poor rate' funding rules. It is misleading, Brundage¹⁴ has said, to describe the old poor law as a 'system' if this implies national uniformity. There were marked differences in various parts of the country because much of the poor law was not laid down in statute but was a collection of customs and practices that suited local circumstances¹⁵.

The 1597 Act gave overseers the twin duties of finding work for the workless and of building parish hospitals and almshouses for those unable to support themselves. The overseers were responsible to the local Justices of the Peace for establishing a poor rate of local property owners to finance local provision of all types of relief. The 1601 Act laid down a national framework for the relief of the able-bodied poor, the relief of the impotent poor and the correction of the idle.

The history of welfare provision reflects the objective of the responsible authority to balance the weighty desire of those paying the rates to pay as little as possible out of their pockets, against the demands of conscience and fellow feeling towards people perceived to be in need of assistance. Allaying hunger also prevented riotous insurrection. The implementation of both the old poor law and the new reflected the tension that is inevitable between these opposing aims. The old poor law however was the child of an essentially rural economy where the landowner and his labourers were interdependent. The proprietor needed a seasonally variable amount of labour to work the fields; it was in his best interests to ensure that during winter and in lean years the surplus labourer was retained and his dependants supported for the harvests to come. Enclosures, the post-Napoleonic War slump and growing industrialisation fractured this mutual dependence. Small rural parishes could support a handful of a poor family's dependants through neighbourliness, bountiful gentry's bequests and modest cash relief as long as the agricultural economy thrived but not when times were hard.¹⁶ In growing urban areas relations between the proprietor and his too readily available workforce were not so mutually comfortable. The unemployed and dependent poor were a social burden that had to be contained in times of prosperity and actively discouraged in times of recession.

The shifting sands of economic prosperity were reflected in the degrees of willingness of the vestries to fund the poor. The old poor law differentiated various kinds of indigence that were to be rewarded or punished in different ways according to the economic and moral context of the time. Several classes of pauper, or 'pensioner' as those of any age receiving regular relief were referred to prior to 1834, able-bodied workless, widows, orphans, women bearing children out of wedlock and vagrants were differentiated as objects for relief strategies of assistance, care and treatment, exclusion or repression.¹⁷ As the moral conscience of the community ebbed and flowed with prosperity and hard times through the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, so did the practical administration of the poor law.

A complex set of rules were enshrined in the Acts of Settlement, which determined which parish by birth, long-term residence, marriage, apprenticeship, employment or relationship would establish an entitlement to seek poor relief when in need and therefore a potential charge on the parish¹⁸. Everyone in theory had entitlement to a settlement somewhere, ensuring that every identified pauper was the clearly designated responsibility of one parish. The rules changed in 1662, 1686, 1795 and 1809 becoming progressively carefully delineated and later more exclusive, requiring parishes to spend huge amounts of administrative time ensuring that applicants for relief were entitled to apply through having a settlement. Numerous volumes of 'Examinations for settlement', detailing the evidence discovered by the Trustees' officers, are retained in the archives of many parishes, witness to the ingenious detective work and hours of investigation invested in this basic task of establishing a criteria for relief entitlement. Those who could not establish a settlement were dealt with on an *ad hoc* 'casuals' basis. Those who were discovered to have a settlement elsewhere, that is the vast majority of those who had unwisely come into towns to escape rural destitution, family strife or the law, were subjected to 'orders of removal'. Would-be settlers were sent back to their parish of origin, sometimes hundreds of miles away. The Acts of Settlement, understandably detested by those subject to removal, were too sure a mechanism of allocating responsibility between parishes to be lightly given up.^a

The administration of the poor laws was modified considerably by 1800, particularly in rural areas, by a series of permissive general laws and local acts of parliament drafted on to the Elizabethan statutes. A single parish was frequently too small to achieve efficiency or economy in the provision of institutions or work schemes for unemployed surplus labour. The departure in some areas from the parish as the unit of administration was striking. By 1834 one third of parishes in Norfolk had formed

^a The principles of the Acts of Settlement were retained in statutory mental health services right up to 1990, when for the first time the NHS and Community Care Act enabled one district service to charge another for patients normally resident outside the catchment area. Until then mentally ill people presenting themselves for treatment with the 'wrong postcode' were shipped off as rapidly as possible to the catchment area responsible. There was a complex set of rules governing which district paid for the ambulance too.

themselves into incorporations under local acts or under Gilbert's Act of 1782.¹⁹ Though comprehensive in its aims, Gilbert's Act was limited in its application. It did not apply in towns or other places where there were incorporated Guardians of the Poor under local Acts, the commonest state of affairs in London. Neither was it compulsory; the Act merely enabled country landowners and other wealthy persons to initiate the union of several adjacent parishes for the administration of the poor law.²⁰

At the dawn of the nineteenth century the spirit of paternalism and reciprocity of responsibility between the community at large and the governing magistracy still determined the style and content of the poor law. Already however intellectuals who could influence parliament were fomenting a challenge to the old order that would have a profound impact on national attitudes to indigence however caused. In London, parishes jealously retained their autonomy under local acts of parliament that modified the administration of the poor laws to suit local circumstances. The content of these acts included regulations for out-relief, the treatment of the able-bodied workless, the use of poor houses and workhouses and the employment of staff to administer poor relief, foreshadowing some of the new poor law provisions. The larger poorer parishes in London such as Shoreditch, Spitalfields and Whitechapel tended to be less liberal than their wealthier neighbours in the City of London and to be less flexible than Gilbert's Act parishes.

The old poor law did not identify mentally disordered people separately from other paupers for eligibility for relief. There were however from medieval times clear distinctions made by parish vestries between idiots, mentally incapable from birth or infancy, and lunatics who had an acquired disorder, the distinction being necessary to secure clarity in the handling of property. Rushton²¹ refers to a number of studies in rural areas from 1600 to 1800 where such distinctions are drawn. Hackney Workhouse rules for the 1750's expressly forbade the admission of lunatics and idiots under separate regulations,²² although it is clear from the Trustees' minutes that these rules were ignored.

By the end of the eighteenth century there was some rudimentary legislation to which parishes were meant to adhere for the treatment of the insane. Unsworth provides a detailed account of these Acts.²³ A poor law statute of 1714 provided that vagrant paupers who were 'furiously mad' were to be exempt from the whipping prescribed for itinerant vagrants and were instead to be confined. The Vagrancy Act of 1744 was the first to mention that parishes had the responsibility to pay for the care of such lunatics, enshrining in statute existing practice.²⁴ These early statutes did not specify where vagrant lunatics were to be confined but the local poorhouse or bridewell would be the most convenient place. By the end of the eighteenth century, parishes were paying out a good deal of cash to place some at least of their more 'difficult to manage' insane paupers in specialist private facilities.²⁵ There were no major changes to legislation governing the poor law of lunacy between 1744 and 1834 although statutes from 1808 encouraged the use of public asylums. Acts of 1811, 1815, 1819 and 1828 all added incentives in that direction, born as they were out of the scandals that emerged during successive parliamentary Select Committees. All major legislation however was concerned with the regulation and inspection of private madhouses and tightening committal procedures, addressing the fears of wrongful confinement of sane people for financial gain and the revelations of aggrieved former patients about the circumstances of their confinement.

The public's increasing awareness of the unsatisfactory conditions in licensed houses owed a good deal to the campaign of indefatigable traveller, documentary journalist and later prison reformer with the unforgettable name, Sir George Onesiphorus Paul. It was Paul's influence that led to the Select Committee inquiry of 1807, which in turn led directly to Wynn's Act of 1808, the enabling Act which allowed for the founding and financing of county lunatic asylums.²⁶ Wynn's Act specified that the new county asylums were for paupers and criminal lunatics only. While a later Act of 1815 allowed paying private patients to be admitted, there were usually only a handful of such cases, admitted primarily Bartlett notes, to increase the total funds coming into the institution.²⁷ The huge capital expense deterred all but a handful of counties from building an asylum. Fifteen were built between 1808 and 1845, many with the additional aid of voluntary subscriptions. The County of Middlesex opened Hanwell

in West London in May 1831 but, as I shall show, it provided only small part of the total provision for East London prior to 1845.

The Lunatics Act of 1845, Shaftesbury's enduring legacy to lunacy, obliged the county justices to build pauper asylums and equally important, directed the Guardians to use them in preference to private institutions. The Act also established the national Commissioners in Lunacy as an overseeing inspectorate that connected the county system and the local Guardians to central government policy by an agency mechanism that was becoming a favourite tool of central government administration. Incentive funding schemes were devised to promote the building of county asylums. The last significant piece of lunacy legislation in the period of study was enacted in 1862, when a more fluid exchange and movement of patients between public asylums and workhouses was introduced to free up a chronically clogged-up institutional system. This marked the beginning of the decline in the perception of lunatics as special and cherished objects of care that the Lunacy Commission had promoted with a fair degree of success since 1845. The Metropolitan Poor Act that followed in 1867 established a London-wide central authority, the Metropolitan Asylums Board for the management of a new tier of poor law asylums for London and created a funding system that promoted the use both of the county asylums and the new poor law asylums.

Life in East London 1800-1870. The area that comprises the modern boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and the City of London had a population of about half a million in the mid-nineteenth century. Within 40 years the East London of 1800 had changed from being a prosperous, green and pleasant area on the City fringe with scattered rural villages in the hinterland to disease-ridden, filthy overcrowded sump of urban impoverishment. The population more than doubled between 1801 and 1871. Displacement of labourers from the gentrifying West End and City, the expansion of the docks, the land clearances from the new railways all shoved poorer people east. The constant inward migration of Irish and English rural poor and displaced native artisans created a society that was ever expanding, a scary netherland of vice, illiteracy and pathology that provided an object for respectable Victorian fear,

loathing, government statistics and charity. The vestries built workhouses, more poorhouses and expanded their medical and poor relief services but the burden of the poor and the numbers of dependent people who required institutional care grew and grew. Idiocy and lunacy were merely varieties of dependence and incompetence amongst many. One of the striking qualities of the East London Overseers and later the Guardians was their measured persistence with the administrative business of poor relief under extra-ordinary pressures, their continuing commitment to consider problems of individuals and their adherence to the principles of the poor law.

Institutions for Pauper Lunatics. Because of its proximity to the City, East London had long been the place of choice in London for institutions of all kinds but most notably for schools, almshouses and private lunatic asylums. Three of the numerous licensed houses, Hoxton House (founded in the late 17th century), Holly House (opened mid-18th century) and Bethnal Green Asylums (opened 1727), were huge multi-site conglomerates of buildings catering to the London and south-east England parish pauper trade and therefore largely funded by the public purse. Many other asylums catered for the better off. There was also a large number of pauper farms, large private institutions which had been established in the eighteenth century, providing poorhouse facilities for City parishes to take more difficult paupers, including some with mental illness. They thrived until driven out of business by the 1834 Act but one at least in East London, Byas' pauper farm, became a licensed lunatic asylum. There were also two voluntary hospitals for lunatics in London, Bethlem Hospital, a charitable foundation established in the Middle Ages²⁸ which was generally full and used infrequently in this tale and St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics founded in 1751. St Luke's played a significant if modest part in the mixed economy of institutional care for lunatics from East London parishes between 1800 and 1830 (see chapter 3). Middlesex Justices established the first County Asylum at Hanwell, West London under the provisions of Wynn's Act in 1831. A second County Asylum opened at Colney Hatch in 1851.

Managing Insanity under the Old Poor Law. The parishes of East London had adopted an institutional solution for the care of the insane before the beginning of the

century. The parish workhouses and pauper farms provided most care for harmless idiots and chronically mad but the private licensed houses at Hoxton and Bethnal Green took the most difficult. The extra cost was justified on grounds of dangerousness and risk. The scandalous conditions revealed by the Select Committee hearings in 1815-16 and 1827 had little impact on parish placement purchasing patterns. There was a gradual increase in the use of licensed houses and a decrease in the use of pauper farms with the growing notion that the insane required special medical care. Employed staff, the beadles, assistant overseers and workhouse masters managed the day-to-day business with the madhouse proprietors and in most parishes, the elected honorary Trustees and Overseers determined overall policy, how money was spent on individuals and had general oversight of parish institutions. Cost was the main determining factor in placement but the direct personal negotiation that characterised relations between the pauper family and the overseers could lead to flexible and original arrangements.

Hanwell Asylum had to compete with the licensed houses and the subscription hospitals in their bid to care for the insane. Hanwell was geographically inconvenient for East London and its use in the early years became acceptable only when the cost dropped below that of the licensed houses. Hanwell came into its own as a major provider only after 1834 when the Poor Law Amendment Act required all 'dangerous' certified lunatics to be placed in special facilities and prescribed a public asylum in preference to private. The Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy in their first annual report of 1829, or perhaps more accurately their new enthusiastic young member Lord Ashley, began his campaign to persuade parishes to use county and voluntary asylums in preference to workhouses and private licensed houses.²⁹ Ashley, who as 7th Earl of Shaftesbury will figure further in this narrative, was fanatically opposed to the profit motive having any influence on public services and continued this campaign for the rest of his life.

The Amendment Act and the New Boards of Guardians. The parishes and unions of East London were as culturally heterogeneous after the poor law amendment act as before. While their enthusiasm for the more punitive aspects of the Act differed, their

approaches to the care of the insane were little changed from before the Act, apart from their ceasing to send parish paupers to St Luke's. Workhouse conditions generally improved and some Boards set up special wards for the insane. In Whitechapel the union doctors had considerable influence on the pattern of treatment and care; while elsewhere doctors appear to have been less influential or less interested in insanity. Parish general practitioners were gradually beginning to develop special interests and some at least took a special interest in the insane. Since the insane made up a significant part of the medical workload, the majority of union doctors required a working knowledge of insanity. The quality of the Guardians' employees, especially the Clerk, the Relieving Officers and the Workhouse masters had a major impact on the care paupers received. Individual personalities determined the culture of their organisations. Stepney Union for example employed staff of real ability and distinction. The county asylums gradually assumed more importance in the total provision of care but the private licensed houses continued to have an important role until the end of the century.

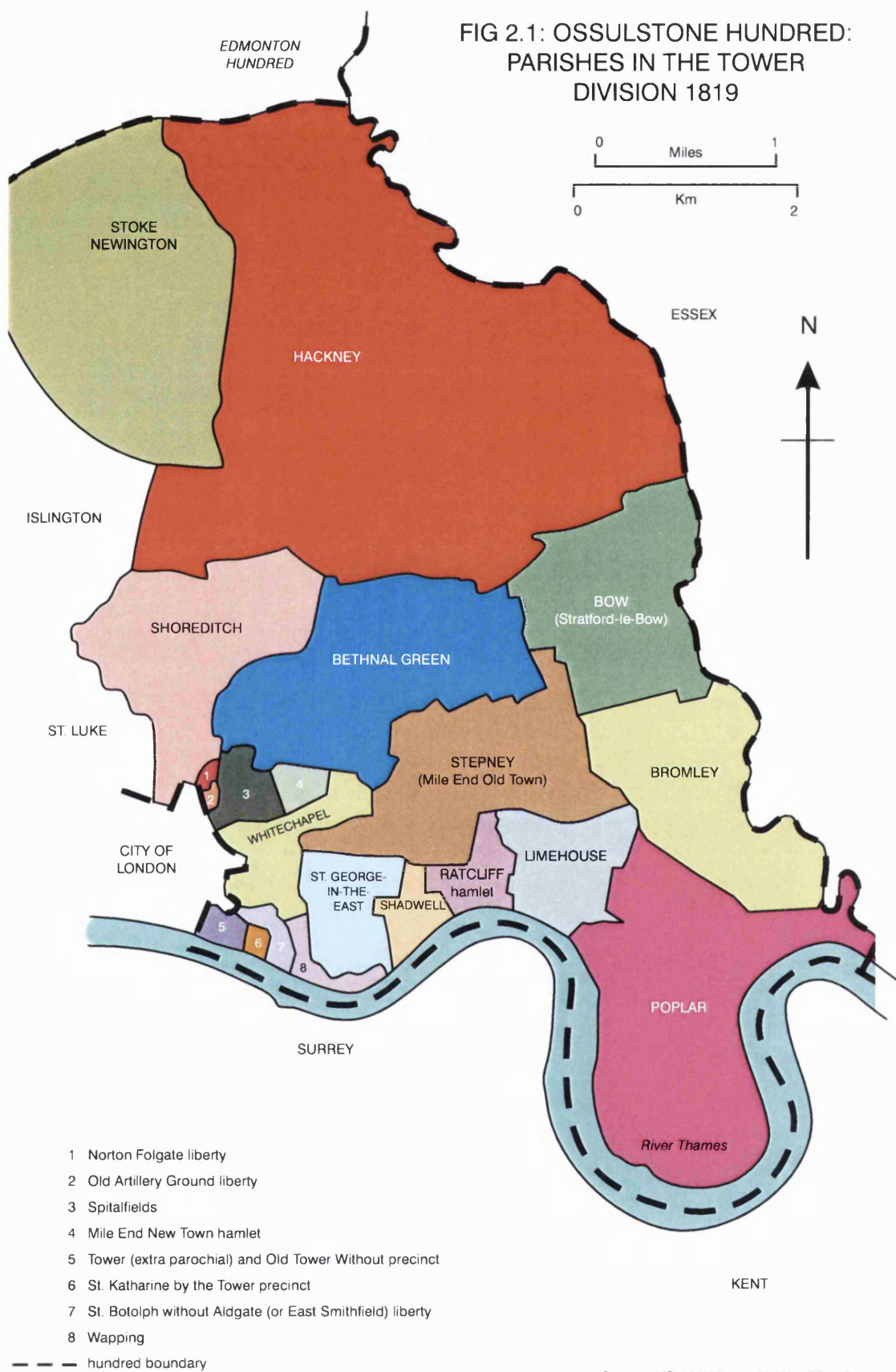
The County Asylums at Hanwell and Colney Hatch. Opened in 1831, Hanwell was inconvenient for the Guardians and for East London families. It was usually full, occupied largely by chronic long-term cases and in practice unavailable to recent cases. The more liberal unions supported the campaign for a second asylum for the eastern parishes and Colney Hatch opened in 1851. Unions adopted different policies in relation to the use of Hanwell. Tension between asylum officers and the guardians' officers about the admission and discharge of paupers, which reflected their divergent objectives, was resolved through the negotiated language of dangerousness and cost. Financial incentives from 1853 encouraged the use of the county asylums although there were never sufficient places to mop up the growing number of paupers designated insane and union workhouses continued throughout the period to provide between a quarter and a third of the beds for lunatics and idiots.

Central Regulation. The old parishes resented the imposition of the Poor Law Commission regulations. Parishes operating under old acts managed to stave off the new poor law provisions for some years, but gradually most of the Guardians accepted

central regulation and control, although with much irritation and resentment about the interfering behaviour of the poor law inspectors. The dissolution of the Poor Law Commission in 1848 rid them of Chadwick, the humourless Secretary of the Commission but the inconsequential meddling of the officious Poor Law Board was no improvement. The new Lunacy Commissioners made only modest headway with the East London Guardians in improving conditions in workhouses. The Commissioners were constrained in their inspection and reporting of conditions in workhouses because of their narrow remit and the rivalry between them and the Poor Law Commission and later the Poor Law Board. The central Board did not concur with Shaftesbury's belief in the moral worthiness of lunatics as special objects of care. Overall the Lunacy Commissioners were less effective in achieving improvements in the metropolitan workhouses and infirmaries than the three doctor 'Commission' appointed by the *Lancet* journal in the early 1860s as part of a campaign to promote proper hospitals for the sick poor.

The Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 effectively downgraded the majority of insane from being regarded as a cadre of paupers requiring special treatment and facilities and reasserted the power of the Poor Law Authority over the magistrates' asylums empire. Idiots and chronic incurable lunatics were to be managed in vast new cheap institutions. The Act also however effectively disempowered the local Guardians, removing their influence over the sick poor of London by vesting control in the Metropolitan Asylums Board, an authority dominated by central government Poor Law Board appointees. Financial policies provided the persuasion the Guardians needed to hand over an increasing number of their paupers to central control. The nineteenth century drive to establish central government administrative control of social policy left the East London Guardians tinkering with the able-bodied workless and the growing burden of the sick old. Policy on the care of lunatic paupers and their relatives had become impersonal and administratively aloof. By 1871, the chaotic and unpredictable care meted out by the essentially neighbourly parishes and early unions had been replaced by the grey uniformity of a remote authority.

MIDDLESEX: OSSULSTONE HUNDRED



Source: VCH Middlesex Vol X, 1995 p2

Chapter 2: Life in East London 1800-1870

The wedge of East London that this study covers became Charles Booth's "East London Quadrant" later in the nineteenth century.³⁰ Broadly it is co-terminous with the Tower Division of the Ossulstone Hundred and incorporates all the areas we now think of the East End, the docklands north of the River and Hackney up to the Lea crossing, that is the modern boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets and the adjacent City of London. In 1841 there was an estimated population of just less than half a million; it is about the same now. Rose called it the *locus classicus* for studies of urban poverty.³¹ Figure 2.1 opposite shows the parishes in East London in 1819.³²

From the top of the Barbican towers, the grey urban landscape of East London stretches as far as the eye can see, much the same view that the journalist Henry Mayhew scanned from a balloon in the 1850s.³³ Between the two distant green rises of Primrose Hill on the left and Blackheath on the right, lies the 50-degree wedge which forms the geographical substrate for my study. Directly below lie a few sanitised remnants of the past. The pristine clean church of St Giles-without-Cripplegate, the recently prettified cupolas of Smithfield Market and the 17th century dolls houses of Charterhouse Square are reminders of a past which has largely been dug up, bombed out or paved over.

Beech Street, Barbican, once notorious for its 17th century 'mollies houses', is now merely a wind tunnel drawing the choking fumes of Moorgate down to Barbican Station.³⁴ No blue plaques here to the homosexual brothels and bawdy-houses of the Barbican's red light days. Nor is there a blue plaque anywhere on the St Luke's council estate just up the road, which squats around the impressive 18th century obelisk, all that remains of the blitzed church of St Luke's Old Street. Yet for nearly two hundred years, St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics^a occupied a handsome building on that site that must have been as well known to local folk as the 'Big Mac' advertising arches at Old Street roundabout are today.

^a For St Luke's Hospital, see chapter 3, p77

Beyond the square mile the view is a grey blur of 19th and 20th century East End streets, a mixture of plaster ornamented Victorian Venetian Gothic factories, warehouses and flats, and offices of 20th century Co-op architecture circa 1962, all pre-cast panels and cheap glass cladding. The dwarfed spires of Hawksmoor and Dance now decorate barely used, half boarded up churches, stranded on traffic junctions like St Leonard Shoreditch and St Botolph Aldgate or buried like Christ Church Spitalfields in an alien neighbourhood of ethnic impermanence. The minarets of new mosques are more central to East London life now than these relics of eighteenth century elegance.

Further east and north of the traditional East End the wedge widens out to the boundaries of the modern boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Hackney. More or less uniformly shabby and ugly in spite of repeated attempt by well-meaning public agencies to redevelop and 'regenerate' them, perhaps because their private populations remain resolutely under-developed and unregenerated and manage to defeat all good intentions within months. Hoxton Square, for example, has a forlorn central park surrounded by vandalised railings bearing a plaque proclaiming that the park was renovated and restored by Dalston City Partnership in 1995. The park benches are battered and covered covered in graffiti, litter piles up in the corners of the patchy green scrub. Hoxton Square has reasserted its determined drive to squalid decay. The truth is that the East End has been defeated by generations of transients on their passage through to decent places to settle, leaving behind only the no-hopers. A staggering forty per cent of the population changes every year.³⁵ Iain Sinclair, walking from north to south of Hackney borough in the mid 1990's got it spot on³⁶: "The area is invisible, one of those zones where inner city crimes slink away to be buried. Public housing that incubates and provides refuge for child pornography rings, drug poverty, lives of petty fraud and tranquillised rage."

There never was a time when the East End was a settled community. A scattering of hamlets and rural villages within an hour's walk of the City with little connection between them was all the area comprised until the explosive growth in the early nineteenth century. Since then the area has been the first port of call for the migrant

Irish, Germans, Jews, African Caribbeans, Asians and more lately the Vietnamese, Somalis, East Europeans, Turkish Kurds and former Yugoslavs. Proximity to the docks attracted the early immigrants who simply disembarked and stayed put. Cheap accommodation and the traditional tolerance of the local community to anything deviant and strange has continued to attract *bona fide* refugees, some dodgy 'asylum seekers,' illegal immigrants and large migrant communities such as the Sylhetti community from the old British tea plantations of Bangladesh who found the locals accepting, indifferent if not welcoming.

Both modern boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets take their essential character of poverty and transience from their geography on the City fringe. Once pleasant villages outside the town, they became perfect 'green field sites' for building institutions to satisfy the philanthropic drive of rich City merchants. Almshouses for pensioners, asylums for widows and orphans, a semi-rural but convenient place to send children to school and to lodge destitute former prisoners and parish paupers, all were conveniently sited here. As early as the 17th century elegant City merchants' houses and one or two grand estates were interspersed with almshouses and asylums. No fewer than 17 livery companies had their almshouses in Hoxton, Kingsland and Hackney, including the drapers, the haberdashers, the weavers, the framework knitters and the mercers.^b

Oddest of all, by the early 1800s Hackney, Stoke Newington, Hoxton, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green had become the most popular place in England for institutions for the mentally ill. All sizes of pocket were catered for, from paupers dependent on parish relief to the mad relatives of the wealthiest aristocratic families. Those that survived into the nineteenth century are described in chapter 3 (institutions that took paupers) and Appendix B (for private patients only).

The private madhouses of Hoxton and Bethnal Green, which in the nineteenth century housed many local folk, provided hundreds of places, 1500 or so by the mid

^b Among the best preserved of the almshouses are the Ironmongers' Company Almshouses, now the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road.

nineteenth century, for incarcerating a diverse range of patients at a wide range of prices. By then half of all private places in licensed houses for the insane in England and Wales were right here in this patch. Certainly there was ample choice in theory if not in practice for those locally charged with managing the mad. The pre-eminence of this patch in the mad business was probably rooted in causes similar to those that generated the 1980s growth in old people's homes on the south coast "Costa Geriatrica." A plentiful supply of large, cheap, readily convertible buildings in an area of decreasing popularity for the wealthier classes, combined with easy accessibility from a large centre of population and a plentiful supply of local labour produces ideal conditions for the trade to thrive.

Before the massive urban expansion of the early 1800s the character of the wedge was still that of separate villages and scattered suburban settlements. The villages of Hackney, Stoke Newington and Dalston were clearly separate from each other and from London by farmed fields, whereas Shoreditch, Hoxton, Clerkenwell, Whitechapel and Stepney were already firmly part of the City's north-eastern reach, tenement courts and alleys cheek by jowl. By the mid-1830s ribbon development can be seen on the map all the way up Kingsland Road due north up through Dalston to Tottenham. Hackney, Homerton and Clapton have been swallowed up by the City and Whitechapel, Mile End, Bromley by Bow and Stratford are contiguous along the route out to Essex.³⁷

The country villages had become poorish but respectable suburbs in the north, more chaotic crowded urban housing in the south. In summer 1828 the new curate of South Hackney, John May, lately arrived from the curacy of the idyllic Suffolk village of Bures St Mary, wrote to his father in Bristol of his disappointment with both the place and the people of Hackney.³⁸

The congregation I have regularly to preach to is of a considerably, for the most part, under lower grade than ...at Clifton, as the higher orders, what there be of them, are regular attendants at the Great Church, which is I understand, and see (for the chapel could not hold them all) frequented in a great measure by my own parishioners, if they

go to divine service at all. Notwithstanding this I have a large congregation but then it is of the lower grade with a few exceptions. I own I wish it were otherwise. The only introductions I have had have been to the Powells for whom I cannot say much, being as I conceive them to be, as little conversant with the manners of the world as it is possible to imagine.

There is not such a thing as a nice walk in or about Hackney so that I shall always confine myself to Mr Norris' garden, which is a delightful one...All the high life of Hackney, what there is, seems to be going off to different watering places and thus Hackney will be quite desolate.

Lacking in good society it might have been but nevertheless the northern reach of the patch was a respectable area throughout the early nineteenth century. Prosperous, fertile market gardens and farms producing fresh food for the City surrounded both Hackney and Stoke Newington. Meadows and cornfields stretched west towards Canonbury from the straggle of houses in the Kingsland Road. Loddige's huge and important hothouse nurseries just off Mare Street were the foremost in the London area.³⁹ There were vast watercress beds across what is now Morning Lane and Chalgrove Road, irrigated from sewage polluted Hackney Brook. Hackney had pretensions to elegance but was probably already on the slippery slope. Rowlandson's 1812 cartoon of local 'quality' meeting at the Assembly Rooms at the Mermaid Tavern illustrates the coarse vulgarity of those with aspirations beyond their station.

The City crept like flowing lava pushing out the unwanted poor east and north. The docklands and the communities clustered around the Highway east out of the City had already assumed something of the inner city character they have today. In the first half of the nineteenth century the population of London doubled, then doubled again by the century's end to some 4.5million, creating a colossus of a City, the largest by far in Europe and larger than the combined population of the next five largest British cities.⁴⁰ A soaring birth rate, immigration of youthful labour from rural areas and massive transmigration of displaced artisans from the developing central areas turned East London into a sump of urban poverty where the possibility of work depended largely on the prosperity of the newly constructed docks and some foul manufactories.⁴¹ ⁴² Green's recent study of economic change and poverty in 19th

century London⁴³ and Stedman Jones' analysis of the disastrous fortunes of the casual labour market⁴⁴ eloquently describe the creation of a marginalised and impoverished East End while the Victorian economy expanded to imperial dimensions. The geographical heterogeneity of the metropolitan population in 1800, rich and poor jostling cheek by jowl in a complex social soup, had separated out into discrete social zones by 1870. As the City's dockland and manufacturing industries grew, the West End became predominantly middle and upper class and the East End predominantly artisan and poor. While the census population of England and Wales doubled between 1801 and 1851, in East London the mid-century population was two and a half times larger than in 1801. (see Table 1, Appendix D)

John Hollingshead, manager of the Gaiety Theatre from 1868, lived most of his adult life in Shoreditch, in a house with back bedroom window views over the airing courts of Hoxton House Asylum.⁴⁵ Judged by Girouard⁴⁶ as 'something of a swell,' Hollingshead was a member of that inquisitive set who were, throughout the mid-19th century, making visits of 'inquiry' into the living conditions of the poor dwelling to the east of the City. Dickens of course, Shaftesbury naturally, but a host of others too, officials like Kay, Arnott and Chadwick from the Poor Law Commission and many 'day-trippers' from the upper and middle classes went perhaps for the vicarious enjoyment of being shocked and to indulge in the fearful trepidation of what might become of London and urban life in general if an even larger impoverished class of 'lower orders' sapped the vitality of the nation.⁴⁷

In a series of ten letters to the *Morning Post* in January 1861 entitled *London Horrors*,⁴⁸ Hollingshead described the conditions he had witnessed in East London over the past quarter century. The winter of 1860-61 was exceptionally bitter; deaths from cold and starvation were being reported regularly in the press. It was opportune to remind the public of conditions invisible to most of the newspaper reading public. "A vast deal of life that skulks or struggles in London is only familiar to the hardworking clergy, certain medical practitioners and a few parochial officers."⁴⁹

Poverty, ignorance, dirt, immorality, crime are the five great division of its history. Immovability, love of place, a determination to huddle together, are some of its chief

characteristics; and the growth of many courts and alleys, disgraceful to humanity, is the sure result.⁵⁰

Behind Shoreditch,

That vast district of eastern London familiar to the public under the broad title of Bethnal Green, would exhaust a twelve month in a house-to-house visitation. It is flat, it is ancient, dirty and degraded; its courts and alleys are almost countless, and over-running with men, women, boys, dogs, cats, pigeons and birds. Its children are ragged, sharp and weasel-like; brought up from the cradle - which is often an old box or an egg chest - to hard living and habits of bodily activity. Its men are mainly poor dock labourers, poor costermongers, poorer silk-weavers, clinging hopelessly to a withering handicraft, the lowest kind of thieves, the most ill-disguised class of swell-mobsmen with a sprinkling of box and toy makers, shoe makers and cheap cabinet makers. Its women are mainly hawkers, sempstresses, the coarsest order of prostitutes and aged stall keepers, who often sit at the street corners in old sedan chairs and sometimes die like sentinels at their posts.^{c 51}

There is nothing exceptional or transient in the conditions of life I am endeavouring faintly to describe. In Whitechapel, St George in the East⁵² and in Bethnal Green the people have lived for nearly a quarter of a century as they are living now.⁵³...If anything, it seems to be getting dirtier and more miserable every year.⁵⁴

A typical Street, Old Nichol Street, Shoreditch^d

is rotten with mud and water; its houses are black and repulsive and at least 50 sinister dark faces look at you from behind blinds and dirty curtains. Courts of the filthiest description branch off on either side filled with the usual dust heaps, the usual pools of inky water and the usual groups of children rolling in the dirt.

Allowing for a touch of the theatrical in Hollingshead's description, it matches closely the formal reports compiled for the Poor Law Commission over twenty years earlier by Arnott, Kay and Southwood Smith.⁵⁵ Fever had ravaged the poorer parishes of London in the winter of 1837 to 1838. The Poor Law Commission called for two reports, one from Neil Arnott MD and James Kay MD on how causes of fever were to be eradicated,⁵⁶ and a second from Southwood Smith on 'causes of sickness and mortality amongst the poor.'⁵⁷ Both reports are eloquent about living conditions

^c Agnes Edgell, aged 73, who kept an oyster stall in Pitfield Street, Shoreditch, died of exposure to cold while sitting at her stall on 24 December 1860 (**Hollingshead** 1861 p.68 quoting from a report in *The Morning Post*).

^d Old Nichol Street was at the heart of the murky Old Nichol, a small area behind the east side of Shoreditch High Street which under the pseudonym of the Old Jago was the setting for Arthur Morrison's 1897 novel *A Child of the Jago*.

across the East End. Hamlin remarks, they “set out to discover the causes of fever.... and found it to be filth.”⁵⁸ "On 1st May (1838) we inspected parts of the eastern extremity of London, about Wapping, Ratcliff Highway, the poorest of Stepney..."⁵⁹

They found

houses and courts or alleys without privies, without covered drains and with only open surface gutters so ill made that in many places the fluid was stagnant.... Houses dirty beyond description as if never washed or swept and extremely crowded with inhabitants who had no means of separation in case of disease arising among them. ...Pigs kept in back yards with sties very filthy and masses of half putrid food for pigs in receptacles which in one instance were in the back room of the house with an open door to the front room in which was lying a man in the last stages of fever.

The eastern metropolitan parish medical officers eagerly accompanied Southwood Smith around the less salubrious parts of their districts. Even in Hackney, by far the most desirable neighbourhood, Frederick Tensh complained of areas in Homerton and Mare Street, Hackney, where a mill dam “allows a large accumulation of decaying and other matter...not at all congenial to health.” Tensh was sure that the problem was made worse by “I am sorry to say, the innate want of cleanliness and care on the part of the poor...notwithstanding my very urgent and strenuous endeavours to articulate their importance to their own welfare and comfort.”⁶⁰

Hopke and Garrett in St George in the East shared Tensh's view. “Many measures are frustrated by the inhabitants themselves.” “The careless and dirty habits of the lower order of people dwelling in many parts of the neighbourhood persist in throwing rubbish and other offensive matters in front of their houses.” Whitechapel parish doctors Sam Byles and John Liddle both wrote letters to Southwood Smith describing similar problems. Liddle added a note about the “mephitical effluvia of burial grounds,” Byles gave a catalogue of disgusting places in Whitechapel and Spitalfields with a special note of “6 Little Pearl Street, known by the name of The Great House. I look upon it as a special nuisance; it is inhabited by 12-14 families.”⁶¹ Dr John Simon, first Medical Officer to the City of London Corporation,⁶² concluded a decade later in 1849 that most Londoners “lived in a beastly degradation of stink.”⁶³

These vivid reports of East End life dominated by dirt, fever, overcrowding and a hand to mouth existence in the face of abject poverty born of unemployment perhaps weigh too heavily with odour free late 20th century readers accustomed to spacious, dirt free homes, flush loos and social security. Daily life is not after all defined by the rituals of keeping clean or even healthy, although the latter counts for a good deal in its absence, but by social relationships, daily occupation and opportunities for enjoyment. And there seem to have been plenty of those in 19th century East London. Birds were kept as pets as well as for eating. Alcoholic drink was cheap and if intemperance was on Southwood Smith's list of chief evils,⁶⁴ it was necessarily a solace, an enlivener and the accessory to social conviviality, needed as Simon said "for a moment [to] dispel the malarious languor of the place, give temporary vigour to the brain and cheer the flagging pulses of the poisoned circulation."⁶⁵ The noxious filth by which reformers and novelists like Dickens,⁶⁶ Kingsley⁶⁷ and later Morrison⁶⁸ and Greenwood⁶⁹ defined the poor slum dweller provide a partial view through a murky prism, they show us no more than the background context, the grubby backdrop against which social relationships were played out.

Without denying the dreadfulness of the physical environment and the difficulties of daily life, there were compensations. Henry Mayhew's *magnum opus*, two volumes of newspaper articles first published in 1851 under the title *London Labour and the London Poor*⁷⁰ was the result of his omnivorous curiosity about the characters who enlivened the City streets. His canvas, while starkly evocative of the grim poverty, is neither gloomy nor despairing, although dirt is ubiquitous and animal smells pervade the air. Ferrets, donkeys, pigs, rabbits, rats, dogs, horses, birds of the edible and inedible kind, fish gold and silver, all add their unique noxious pong to the streets and alleys. Intemperate habits and endemic gambling stalk his pages, pushing men to the brink of destitution, but spirits were lifted by twopenny hops, the Saturday night street markets, cards, cribbage, shove-halfpenny and skittles played for beer or a few pence. Boxing, or sparring, was especially favoured by tanners and some costers as both a participant and spectator sport but rat-killing, dog fighting and pigeon shooting were less personally hazardous, if illegal.

Most amusements were for men, who habitually spent most of their evenings in one of the 400 beer shops,⁷¹ but women and children joined in the clog-hornpipe dances, jigs and polkas at the hops, music provided by a fiddler and on a good day, a harpist or a cornopean^e player. In Hoxton, pony races were held regularly on land at the Rosemary Branch Tavern.^f Mitford, the hack writer and resident of Hoxton had a poor opinion of his own neighbourhood.⁷²

Somewhat curious is the fact that although lovers of society, gregarious to a fault, debonaire in their movements, the Hoxtonians...have not one place of public amusement, no theatre, in barn or building is to be found over all the flat space. To make amends for this seeming defect we have the custody of good numbers of insane members of all classes;^g ...in this respect the parish of Hackney is not far behind its next and central neighbour whist the madhouses of Bethnal Green class nearly with those of St Luke.^h ⁷³

Mitford was not easily pleased; while complaining that Hoxton was dreary, he was displeased with the influx of “foreign” folk. “The Spitalfielders in full work are as lively as a bag of fleas...This disposition they owe to their ancestors the French.”⁷⁴

Musical theatres and penny concerts would be affordable only to the more successful of the street traders and labourers. Poor Londoners then as now belonged to a multi-layered society containing many shades of impoverishment, layers that are readily missed by the casual middle class visitor. Quennell⁷⁵ remarked on the fantastic diversity of trades and occupations that Mayhew surveyed. Besides innumerable street-sellers, vending every kind of object from nutmeg graters to tracts, to birds’ nests and dogs, there were a hundred varieties of sweepers, scavengers, ‘finders’ who lived on the pickings from mud and ordure. ‘Mudlarks’, ‘pure-finders’ (who sold dog

^e A cornopean was an 8ft reed instrument.

^f The Rosemary Branch Tavern is now a pub-theatre

^g Including Mitford himself of course

^h “Hoxtonians are too far north for the rest of mankind” Mitford writes, referring to the prevalent sharp practice in Joint Stock Bubbles, presumably referring back to the greatest Bubble of them all the previous century, “and this is one great reason that the custody of maniacs is assigned to this district in preference to any other”. Mitford’s lines of argument are not always crystal clear.

dirt to tanneries) and 'toshers' who fished the sewers, according to Mayhew were capable of earning quite decent wages from the pickings.

Life in the dockland parishes of St George in the East, Shadwell and Wapping, where many of the tradesmen Guardians based their businesses, was described by Mayhew in affectionate but smelly detail.⁷⁶

The courts and alleys around the dock swarm with low lodging houses; and are inhabited, either by dock-labourers, sack makers, water men or that peculiar class of the London poor who pick up a living by the water side. The open streets themselves have all a maritime character. Every other shop is either stocked with gear for the ship for the sailor. The windows of one house are filled with quadrants and bright brass sextants, chronometers and huge mariners' compasses with their cards trembling with the motion of the cabs and waggons passing in the street...Then comes sailmakers, their windows stowed with ropes and lines smelling of tar. All the grocers are provision merchants and exhibit in their windows cases of meat or biscuits; and every article is warranted to keep in all weather. The corners of the streets are mostly monopolised by slop sellers....

As you enter the dock the sight of the forest of masts in the distance and the tall chimneys vomiting clouds of black smoke, and many coloured flags flying in the air, has a most peculiar effect; while the sheds with the monster wheels arching through the roofs look like the paddle boxes of huge steamers... As you pass along this quay the air is pungent with tobacco; on that it overpowers you with the fumes of rum; then you are nearly sickened with the stench of hides and huge bins of horns; and shortly afterwards the atmosphere is fragrant with coffee and spice... Here you sniff the fumes of wine and there the peculiar fungus smell of dry rot; then the jumble of sounds as you pass along the dock blends in anything but sweet concord.

The morning scene of men scrambling for work over each others' backs was not a pretty one. "It is a sight to sadden the most callous, to see thousands of men struggling for only one day's hire; the scuffle being made the fiercer by the knowledge that hundreds out of the number there assembled must be left to idle out the day in want."

There is no escaping the hard graft, the desperation or the misery of those who did not know how they could make ends meet to the next Saturday night. But this is not in general an aggressive society. Most violence was born in the beer shop, although petty criminality was normal and sexual abuse of children an inevitable consequence of the "crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor."^{77 78}

Life in Hackney however was a far more genteel affair in the 1830s and 40s. Serious poverty was largely confined to the areas south and east of Hackney. Mitford thought the Homerton neighbourhood of Hackney "the very dullest hamlet in the King's dominions in Europe."⁷⁹

This was a community with little ethnic conflict, although poor German and Irish migrants were reviled as dirtier and more criminal than is strictly justified by the facts.⁸⁰ Huguenots were well integrated by the nineteenth century. Between 1670 and 1710 it is thought that 40-50,000 Huguenots, Calvinist French Protestants, settled in England, 15,000 in Spitalfields and the eastern fringes of Bethnal Green mainly engaged in silk weaving.⁸¹ Spitalfields was densely populated by 1775, with two to three families in every house. The Huguenot immigrant community was unusual in being of mixed social class. Their community leaders/merchant class settled around Spital Square, the journeymen handloom weavers and labourers in the tenements around. They spoke French up to the end of the 18th century but were rapidly assimilated into the English population through intermarriage. With the mid-nineteenth century development of factory looms, the economic significance of the area declined and the Huguenots migrated out of the East End to find work, leaving only their elegant houses and a handful of their original 17 churches behind as a legacy.⁸²

An unknown number of German labourers came from the shipyards to find work in East London in the early nineteenth century. They had the reputation for taking on work that neither English nor Irish wanted, like slaving in the hot sugar refineries. They were even poorer than the Irish. There is little sign of them in the Trustees of the Poor and Guardians' minutes and they remain a small shadowy community. The 1861 census of Whitechapel and St George in the East returned about 8000 Germans, Prussians, Hollanders and Poles, who Stallard assumed were Jewish in his comparative study of Christian and Jewish paupers.⁸³

Throughout the nineteenth century the Irish were profoundly unpopular in England. There are numerous contemporary references to their criminality, laziness, stupidity, fecklessness and the impoverishment that placed such excessive burdens on London

parishes.⁸⁴ The association of crime and Irishness meant that every Irishman was assumed to be dishonest and every criminal assumed to be Irish. Poor land, over-reliance on one crop and potato blight, which affected the harvest for many years before the catastrophic blight of the 1840s, drove hundreds of thousands of Irish west to the States and to England and Scotland. There were significant numbers of Irish in Spitalfields, Whitechapel and around the docks in Shadwell by the mid-eighteenth century and a smaller group in Hackney Wick.⁸⁵

The East London parish records make numerous reference to Irish paupers. They were not formally subject to the Acts of Settlement until 1846 and were therefore able to travel to seek work which English labourers were discouraged from doing. But as unemployed paupers, English and Irish, posed an increasing burden on the parishes in the late twenties and early thirties, huge numbers of Irish were shipped back to Ireland every year via Liverpool, up to 20,000 per year. "Passed to Ireland" is a common entry in the Trustees and Boards minutes. The Irish were willing to work in tough jobs that English labourers disdained and for less cash. Consequently they clustered around the docks, Spitalfield, Whitechapel and St Luke's where they could get work in the City and in the house building trades. John Othen, the Clerk to Worship Street Court told the Poor Law Commission in 1832 that a majority of the paupers receiving summonses were Irish, perhaps a third on average were prostitutes.⁸⁶ Their Catholicism and willingness to live in pig-sty-like filth set them at the bottom of the pauper social heap.

The settlement laws were refined in 1846 to include entitlement to relief for Irish paupers who could prove they had been resident for 5 years or more but this was soon shortened to a year, causing further resentment in some parishes. The famine years produced a flood of Irish into mainland Britain and by the 1851 census they formed 4.6% of London's population. Whitechapel had well over 10% Irish. They remained a significant minority in the East End until the massive influx of Jews displaced them as the dominant migrant group.⁸⁷

Italians who came mostly as temporary summer labourers and ice-cream makers in the 1850s were concentrated in the Holborn/ Saffron Hill/ Clerkenwell area and do not

seem to have strayed much further east.⁸⁸ They often migrated to and from their rural homes in Italy, working the summer months here then returning for the Italian *vendemmia* in October and the winter olive harvest. The Italian Church was the focus of social and religious activities. Some later settled permanently in England.

The mass migration of Ashkenazi, East European, especially Russian Jews did not begin until the 1870s. While 75% of all Russian and Polish immigrants to England were living in the City of London, Whitechapel, St George in the East and Mile End Old Town in 1871, they were only a few thousand in number. Over the next 30 years the Jewish numbers swelled by migration and a high birthrate to become the dominant migrant group in the area, between a third and a half of the poorest parishes being Jewish. Jews then do not figure at all in the following tale. There were a handful of wealthy Sephardic Jewish families of Portuguese and Spanish origin settled in Hackney from the eighteenth century but many of these moved out as the neighbourhood slipped in status in the mid nineteenth century.⁸⁹

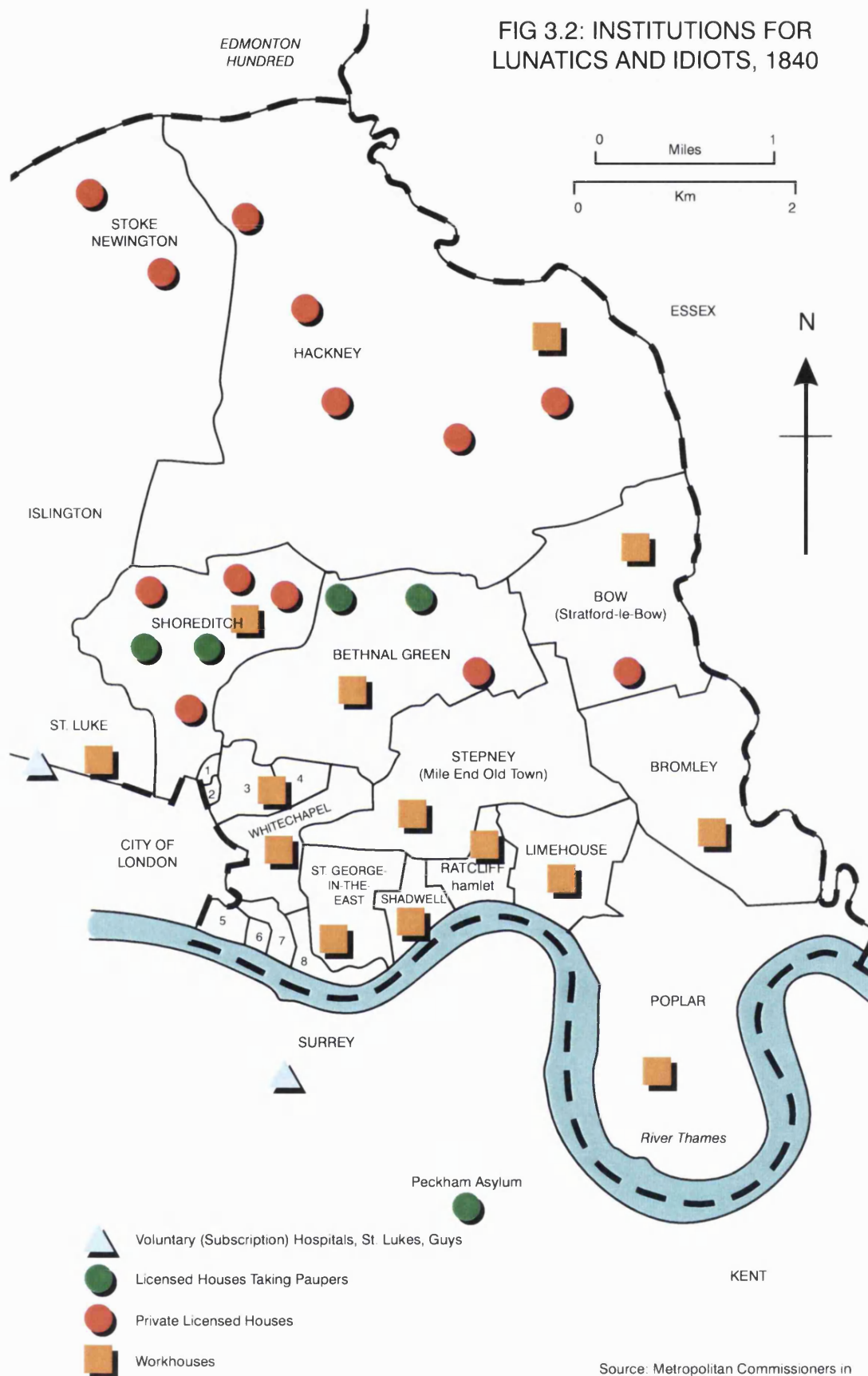
Throughout the nineteenth century up to 1870, East London was predominantly a community of migrant English with a significant handful of Irish, a few Welsh and Scots. They worked as labourers and tradesmen, when they could find work, in the City, the docks and the myriad trades that fed on middle-class London life. For much of the period, there were small enclaves of pleasant villages left, along Cambridge Heath in Bethnal Green, in Clapton and Stoke Newington and in parts of Bow and Stepney but they were fast disappearing as the area turned into the huge sorting station of human folly, frailty and refuge that it remains today.

FIG 3.1: INSTITUTIONS FOR LUNATICS AND IDIOTS IN EAST LONDON 1814-15



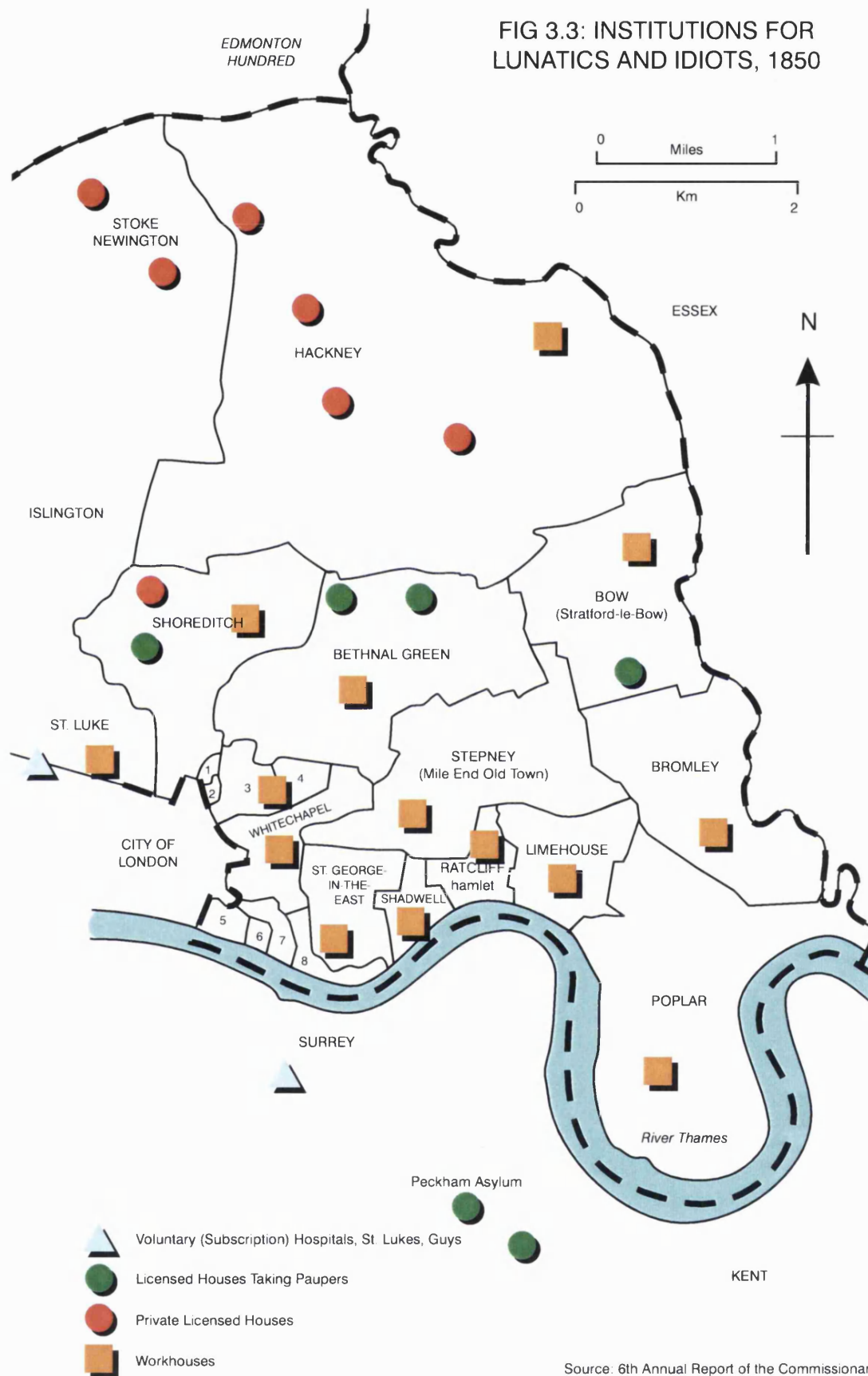
Source: Evidence to Select Committee on Madhouses 1815-1816 submitted Dr R Powel

FIG 3.2: INSTITUTIONS FOR LUNATICS AND IDIOTS, 1840



Source: Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy and Board of Guardians' Minutes

FIG 3.3: INSTITUTIONS FOR LUNATICS AND IDIOTS, 1850



Source: 6th Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1851, Boards of Guardians' Minutes

Chapter 3: Institutions for Pauper Lunatics in East London: A Significant Service Industry.

The concentration of lunatic institutions, mad-doctors and keepers in East London by the beginning of the 19th century created locally an unusually thriving market economy in patients and staff. This study is essentially about how local and central government tackled the challenge of madness through the developing processes of 'social administration'. It is therefore mainly confined to paupers and others dependent on the public systems and the institutions that served them. Institutions that were an essential part of the economy of care for east-end lunatics from 1800 to 1870 are described below. There were however a number of other important institutions in the area that catered solely for wealthier patients or for other exclusive groups. Descriptions of these can be found at Appendix B.

Proprietors, doctors, superintendents and keepers constructed a complex web of personal and business relationships and interdependent financial arrangements that spanned the private, voluntary and public sectors. An understanding of the context in which the public services worked requires a grasp of the economic spectrum of provision from the socially exclusive to what might be termed the 'socially over-inclusive'. No pauper was ever turned away from Bethnal Green Asylums, however full, while Warburton had room in his purse for the fee. The network of professional and business links extended to the charitable and voluntary hospitals of Bethlem, St Luke's and Guy's Mad House and a metropolitan network of madhouses in Islington and West London.

Diversity of style of provision and a huge volume of trade were the key characteristics of this thriving local service industry. The institutions have been mapped out in the Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 opposite, for 1814-5, reported to the Select Committee of 1815-6, for 1840 from the Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy and for 1850, when the national Commissioners in Lunacy were beginning to make their influence felt.

The descriptions of institutions below and in Appendix B owe much to the work of Dr Arthur Morris,^{90 a} who published his classic monograph on the Hoxton Madhouses in 1958, based largely on evidence to the Select Committees on Madhouses in 1815-16 and 1827.⁹¹ Morris also left some helpful hand-written notes and correspondence in Tower Hamlets Archives.

The 'free trade in lunacy' has been regarded until recently as an essentially eighteenth century phenomenon that lingered on into the nineteenth. The trade was partially eclipsed first by the establishment of voluntary lunatic hospitals and asylums in the last half of the eighteenth century and then dismembered by the burgeoning County Lunatic Asylums ushered in by the obligatory 1845 Lunatics Act. In fact, independent private and voluntary enterprise was not superseded by public provision until much later in the nineteenth century and continued to make a significant contribution to the total provision right up until the end of the century.

The size of the private trade and its importance in the 19th century has not perhaps been given sufficient attention. Jones for example criticises Parry-Jones for daring to suggest that private madhouses made a significant contribution to the care of the mad and that many were respectable and kindly institutions.⁹² And while Scull and Porter both drew attention to the diversity of the institutions and the huge size of the pauper lunatic houses in London,⁹³ their significance has been underplayed in the discourse about the growth of public asylums.

The hey-day of the private Licensed House has been placed firmly at the end of the eighteenth and first quarter of the 19th century, only Parry-Jones challenging this perception in his study of the provincial licensed houses.⁹⁴ He concluded that the private madhouses attained their greatest prominence and fulfilled their most important role in the period which began in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and extended through the first half of the nineteenth. There were choices available across the private and public sector to the Trustees of the Poor and later to the Boards of Guardians until quite late in the nineteenth century. The mixed economy of care

^a See Foreword and acknowledgements

remained fluid and susceptible to local economic and cultural forces long after the 1845 Act.

In 1848 one half of all the lunatics confined in asylums in England and Wales were in private licensed houses.⁹⁵ The official statistics both from the metropolitan and provincial houses confirm the valuable contribution of made by the private asylums to the management of pauper lunatics well into the second half of the 19th century. They compensated for the inadequate numbers of places in county asylums, responded faster to the demand for urgent admission of recent cases and were often more conveniently sited for visiting and the business of getting patients to and from. In some provincial areas licensed houses which had closed after the 1845 Act reopened and new ones, like Haydock Lodge^b in Lancashire, and Duddeston Hall in Birmingham opened to meet the growing market demand.⁹⁶

The pauper lunatic houses of East London were strikingly different in a number of respects from the commonly accepted wisdom about the generality of madhouses. The licensed trade can be characterised both in London and the provinces as dominated by smallish ephemeral businesses, quickly established to meet the urgent demand for places in the early to mid-nineteenth century, medical proprietors gradually replacing the laymen madhouse keepers of earlier times. The number of counties containing madhouses doubled from 1807-1844 and during the same period the numbers of madhouses tripled.⁹⁷

^b Haydock Lodge grew rapidly from 1842 until by 1846 it had 400 beds, mainly for Lancashire paupers. It was the subject of an inquiry into poor conditions and suspected patient abuse in 1847. (Further Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy relative to Haydock Lodge Lunatic Asylum 1847 (14) XLIX.291). The resident owner was **Charles Mott**, former Assistant Commissioner for the Poor Law for the Eastern Metropolis, the most irritatingly pedantic and rigid of the visiting inspectors suffered by the Boards of Guardians in the post-1834 period (see chapter 5). During the inquiry Mott's recent post as Poor Law Commission auditor for the North-West was noted. He escaped serious censure because he left the Commission a year before opening the asylum. Nevertheless it was noted that he had been in a uniquely privileged position in having access to all the guardians' accounts of spending on lunatic placements in the area he established his business. The Inquiry team did not know, or if they did it was not mentioned, that Charles Mott had been in the pauper mad trade before. He appeared as co-proprietor with Peter Armstrong for Peckham Asylum one year during the time he was an Assistant Commissioner in London. Did he sell his interest in the asylum or become a silent partner?

The Metropolitan Commissioners' 1844 'Doomsday Book' ^c review of all institutions for lunatics in England noted the date for each when the first patient was admitted.⁹⁷ Of 48 provincial houses solely for paying patients, 17 had been opened before 1820 but of the 41 provincial houses taking paupers only 6 had been in existence for more than 20 years. The majority of London licensed houses were similarly of recent origin. The East London pauper houses were quite different however. These were not 'Johnny-come-lately's' created specifically to milk the public purse. Miles' and Warburton's houses were well established businesses set up over a century earlier, Hoxton House having taken its first patient in 1695, according to Sir Jonathan Miles and Bethnal Green was in business in the early 1700's. The original proprietors were long gone; the business leases had been traded as going concerns several times before the current owners took over. MacDonald dates the appearance of the madhouse trade in England to the 1660's; the early proprietors were truly innovative entrepreneurs.⁹⁸ If there was a skill in milking the trade these businesses had been perfecting it over long years of practice, having been the preferred placement for pauper lunatics in London and the south-east for as long as anyone could remember.

Most madhouses were small. The greater number of provincial houses contained around 25 patients and many were smaller. In 1841 Gateshead Fell, the largest of the well-known Gateshead cluster in County Durham, an enclave of lunatic houses identified as rivalling the geographical huddle in east London, had only 71 beds.^d Only Hook Norton in Oxfordshire, Brislington in Somerset, Duddeston near Birmingham and Lavington in Wiltshire had more than 100 beds. The largest of these, Lavington had 175 (135 paupers, 40 private). Of the County Lunatic Asylums in 1841 only Lancaster and Middlesex had more than 400 beds, Surrey and West Riding being the next two largest with 270 and 246 beds respectively. The remainder of the fifteen early public asylums established after Wynn's Act then had under 200 beds.

^c 'Doomsday Book' was **Daniel Hack Tuke's** apt description of the detailed account by Ashley and colleagues of every lunatic institution in the country, the 1844 Report to the Lord Chancellor by the Metropolitan Commissioners which informed the introduction of the 1845 Act. (Tuke DH 1882 Chapters in the History of the Insane in the British Isles. London, Kegan Paul Trench, 178)

^d The others were Bensham 66 places, Dunston Lodge 60, Wrekenton 32, West Auckland 29

The majority of London houses were even smaller than in the provinces. Of the 36 operating in 1816 a quarter were registered for fewer than 10 patients and the majority were for less than fifty. Hoxton House and the two Bethnal Green Asylums had nearly 500 patients each at that time, far larger than either Bethlem or St Luke's. By 1844 the numbers were down slightly but there were nearly 600 patients at Bethnal Green and just less than 400 at Hoxton, over 400 at Grove Hall Bow and 250 at Peckham. Only Bethlem with 355 patients and the four largest county asylums could rival the East London houses in size. None of the provincial houses contained over 180 patients at that time although a few expanded very rapidly soon after.

The mammoth size of the East London houses (even the smallest of the pauper houses, Burrows, had well over 100 inmates by the early 1830's), sets these institutions apart from the common run of houses. Scull⁹⁹ attributes the vastness of these London houses to their very low charges, which made it essential to attract large numbers of inmates to generate any reasonable profit at all. Large numbers of patients allowed the proprietors to buy provisions and linen in bulk cheaply, the annual contracts for linen, meat and bread must have been highly desirable for local tradesmen just as they were for those who supplied the workhouses.

It was not simply the attraction of their being cheap that enabled these asylums to grow into huge enterprises in the eighteenth century, nor was their expansion driven only by business imperative to keep financial turnover high although no doubt both were important considerations. It was their geographical situation on the very edge of the City of London that provided a unique market opportunity. Before the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 obliged the City to form Poor Law Unions, the old Poor Law was administered by over 90 separate and individual parishes, many tiny with no more than 2000 residents. All made their own arrangements and many had no parish poorhouse or workhouse of their own or only a very small one with a handful of places. Some parishes united to create a joint poorhouse but most did not. Children, the refractory, the chronically sick and the idiotic were all sent out of the City to 'farms' on the outskirts of town. Tipple's in Hoxton was a typical pauper farm used

by a dozen City parishes for paupers requiring 'round-the-clock' supervision, (see below). There were several around Hoxton, Shoreditch, Clerkenwell, Bethnal Green and Bow. The most difficult paupers, those that were behaviourally disturbed, violent or self destructive possibly required more oversight and control than Mr Tipple and his fellow pauper farmers could provide and hence a special institution would be required. It seems likely that the unusual character of these small workhouse-less City parishes fostered the early expansion of the East London madhouses. The early development of charitable general hospitals for the sick in London, like St Bartholomew's, St Thomas' and Guy's Hospitals may also have been in part stimulated by the lack of convenient 'in-house' provision for the sick poor in the City.

By 20th century standards the East London licensed houses were not especially large. We are accustomed to the notion of 1000 bed hospitals, factories of 10,000 car workers, comprehensive schools of 2000 pupils, mental handicap institutions of 2000 places, although even today a hospital of 500 beds is the exception rather than the rule. In the early 1800's such a size of institution was almost unknown. Factories were almost always small, even in the largest industries. As late as 1840 less than 10% of cotton spinning mills employed more than 500 people and just under a half had less than 100.¹⁰⁰ Ninety one per cent of Yorkshire woollen masters employed fewer than fifty. Prisons too were small although they expanded massively in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Middlesex prison at Coldbath Fields^e in Clerkenwell was one of the largest with about 300 inmates in 1810,¹⁰¹ although by 1850 it had 1400 places, rivalling Millbank in size. Most prisons were much smaller until the middle of the century.¹⁰²

The nearest institutions in size to the East London pauper madhouses were the voluntary hospitals. Guy's Hospital had 500 beds at the beginning of the nineteenth century,¹⁰³ St Thomas' about the same,¹⁰⁴ the London 300 or so.¹⁰⁵ There were only 1600 general hospital beds in London but they were concentrated in seven hospitals. Hospitals were, by asylum standards, very well staffed with attendants and visiting

^e Coldbath Fields Prison, Clerkenwell was closed in 1877. The site is now occupied by Mount Pleasant PO Sorting Office

experts. Several visiting physicians and surgeons, student clerks and dressers, apothecaries, chaplains and domestics swelled the ranks of the staff whereas at one time Warburton employed only two attendants for the entire male side at Bethnal Green and staff were always scarce. No wonder chains and strait waistcoats became the normal management technique for disturbed inmates.

The East London houses also had the great advantage of high visibility. There was no need to advertise when the premises were as splendid a marketing feature as these well-known local landmarks. Both Hoxton House and Bethnal Green fronted onto main traffic thoroughfares. The main route out of town to the east and north went directly via Cambridge Heath and Bethnal Green. It would be hard to miss the Asylum on the Green either in its White House days or in its subsequent late-Georgian shape. It certainly cannot be missed now, transmogrified into Bethnal Green Library and still dominating the Green. Every regular traveller to Cambridge, Newmarket and points east would be as familiar with the Asylum as the Salmon and Ball Tavern opposite. Hoxton House, even in the eighteenth century was in the middle of a theatre district that extended up from Curtain Road up Hoxton Street towards the Rosemary Branch Tavern and led to an area renowned for its pretty walks and rural villages. Hoxton House was right on the main road and surely would have been quite well recognised.

Some of the 'private patients only' East London houses occupied truly splendid buildings—Whitmore House and Northumberland House were surprisingly palatial mansions. Even Brooke House though somewhat physically run down for much of the nineteenth century, had been one of the most prestigious great houses in the area. These were not 'hole-in-the-corner' shady businesses, so why have we got the impression they were? John Conolly, that master proselytiser of the rival public asylum system described the private houses as gloomy, grubby back-street "buildings on which no eye rested with pleasure," "repulsive in aspect and bore a suspicious character."¹⁰⁶

Old buildings can go rapidly to seed if poorly maintained and etchings can create false impressions of grandeur but Conolly's implication that the trade operated in a back street kind of way is not born out by the 'up-front' obviousness of the East London cluster. Their proprietors moreover were men of considerable social position on the local scene. Thomas Warburton was a Trustee of the Poor and a considerable freeholder in Hackney, where he lived. He served on the local almshouse charity committee (Dr Spurstowe's) for many years. The street and council flats named after him in Hackney probably commemorate his place of residence and more edifying public-spirited activities rather than his business venture. Warburton's son was considered a good enough catch to marry the daughter of the most distinguished (and wealthiest) surgeon of his generation. The two Jonathan Miles's, father and son, were prominent members of the Painter-Stainers' Company and were well-heeled enough to keep a mansion house with a 'park' in fashionable Ealing. The pauper lunacy business made the Warburton and Miles families rich and respectable.

These proprietors were also unusual in not being resident on site and in employing resident non-medical superintendents to undertake the day to day supervision of the patients. Their careless recruitment of inadequate or downright bad staff who were left unsupervised led to the scandalous abuses. The proprietors simply did not see what was going on most of the time. Most licensed houses, even those opened later in the century like Haydock Lodge were occupied by the owners as resident proprietors, the majority of proprietors being medical men who opened up their own homes to patients as a species of 'paying guest'. Warburton lived at his private establishment Whitmore House in the early years of his business but as his profits grew he acquired a separate home for himself. The elder Miles had also lived on site but again as wealth accumulated Miles naturally did as other successful men and bought himself a place in the country. The Monroe family did not live at Brooke House either after the turn of the eighteenth century. Thomas H Monroe^f had rooms at the Adelphi when in

^f **TH Monroe** was entered into the Annual Returns of the Metropolitan Commissioners as Henry Monroe and referred to as Henry in a number of official documents for years after. It seems however that he was Thomas to his painter friends



Herby Castle, now the Mad-House, Bethnal-Green, taken in the year 1794

Fig 3.4: The White House 1794 Drawing unknown artist Source: British Museum: Acc.As753



Fig 3.5: **Bethnal House**, built 1843, photograph c 1890, Tower Hamlets Archive.

town and retreated to his watercolours in a splendid country house at Bushey, Hertfordshire for weeks at a time.

In several respects then the East London pauper houses were unusual, in origin, in size, in the important contribution they made to public social services in the City of London and the wider metropolis throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Parry-Jones complained that “The major public service which private licensed houses rendered...has not received the recognition it merits, due in part to a too ready acceptance of the more sensational disclosures and also to long-standing prejudice.”¹⁰⁷ Parry-Jones may have been referring to the prejudices of the nineteenth century asylum reformers or to the prejudices of his own day, that is the 1960's and 70's. Perhaps he meant both. There is reluctance today to acknowledge the contribution of the independent sector, an attitude that has its origins in the steely grip of centralist welfare theology,¹⁰⁸ referred to by those who espouse the ideology as 'public sector values'.

Theories for the growth of lunatic incarcerations in the late nineteenth century, if they hold water as meaningful explanations, must hold good whether the providers are publicly or privately owned. It is the purchaser that drives the financial system, not the service provider. The private licensed houses were much more important 'providers' in the mixed economy of care in 19th century East London than has hitherto been acknowledged.

Licensed Houses Taking Pauper Lunatics

Bethnal Green Asylums (Warburton's). When Matthew Wright took a fifty-year lease on Bethnal House, Bethnal Green in 1727 to use as a madhouse,¹⁰⁹ he launched a business which occupied premises on this site continuously for nearly two centuries, until 1920. The early years of the institution from 1727-1800 are described in Appendix B. The last surviving asylum building, built in 1896, is now Bethnal Green Public Library. Throughout much of its history it was run as two separate institutions known as the White House and next door the Red House. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show the White House in 1794 and the main buildings round about 1843.

Thomas Warburton bought the business from James Stratton on 26th September 1800. With the arrival of Warburton, the business rapidly expanded. He appointed Matthew Talbot to manage the White House and Mr Rhodes the Red House. The buildings of both houses were arranged as a terrace of connecting buildings, all of which received separate licenses from the Visiting Physicians. The Red House was thought by Wakefield to be the only metropolitan licensed house specially built for the reception of lunatics¹¹⁰ but this seems unlikely since the former proprietor, Wright ran it before he acquired the White House.⁸ In 1814 there were five separate licenses, each for “more than 10 patients.”¹¹¹

Warburton used the Bethnal Green Houses predominantly for paupers, well over 300 of them. Almost all the City of London parishes and many in the south east of England contracted to send their pauper lunatics there rather than look after them in local poorhouses. The parish of St Marylebone had 51 patients, at a cost of 10s per head per week, in the month of March 1815, 16 men and 35 women. During that month, their paupers Susannah Hall and Elizabeth Fleming were admitted, Martha Smith was discharged, James Miller was sent to St Luke’s and John Short an epileptic died. Many parishes, especially distant ones, rarely visited their paupers. Unusually, St Marylebone sent the whole parish medical team of surgeon J Phillips,¹¹² physician J Hooper and apothecary W F Goodger every month to inspect the state of the asylum and to make a report about the condition of the individual patients. They submitted a monthly written report to the Trustees. The one quoted above was produced in evidence to the Select Committee of 1815 by one of the Trustees of the Poor, Lord Robert Seymour, who was also a member of the Select Committee, as an illustration of how parishes should supervise the care of their paupers.¹¹³ In the light of subsequent reports of “insiders” one might question how useful these snapshot visits really were. Inspectors cannot substitute for good management, rather they depend on them for their effectiveness.

Seymour knew the asylum well:

I am...in the practice of visiting the insane poor at Mr Warburton's Bethnal Green. I very frequently see them; and it is due to the servants who have the care of those unfortunate persons, to say that they are in such a state as little uncomfortable as the humane and tender attention of such servants can make them: But the house having been built for the use of a private family, as houses of a like nature have generally been, is very unfit for the great number of persons it now contains; the ceilings are extremely low, the beds are so closely stowed as to be nearly in contact with each other, and the airing or exercise grounds are most inconveniently small.

When first I visited this house I thought I could see that the water supplied to the patients by the servants of the house was not in the quality and quantity always what it should be. I therefore recommended to Mr Warburton to fix a pump in each airing yard, which he most obligingly and readily did; and these pumps have not only contributed to the health and comfort of all the patients but also to their amusement. I wish I could also now prevail on Mr W. to extend and enlarge the airing grounds of his several houses; the sacrifice of ground would be very small on his part, and the substantial benefit the enlargement would render to the numerous patients he has under his care, would in my mind be incalculable. The present airing yard now used by the women at Bethnal Green, is most shamefully small and close. It has always appeared to me, in the Madhouses I have seen, that the keepers were too few, and that the fewness of them subjected the patients to much restraint which would be avoided were the keepers more numerous.¹¹⁴

The sleeping arrangements at Bethnal Green were ramshackle. If there were insufficient beds for the number of bodies, then two must squeeze into one. Seymour pointed out, "Everybody who is connected with parochial workhouses must have learnt, that the practice of putting male paupers into one bed frequently leads to the most abominable consequences."¹¹⁵ Both Warburton and Miles at Hoxton House would cram three in a bed when pushed; two was the norm in many rooms, perhaps 17-18 people squeezing into beds for 10. In spite of this, Seymour thought lunatics had a "better chance of recovery and comfort" at Bethnal Green than in a workhouse and besides, lunatics were "a mischievous annoyance to the other inhabitants of the workhouse."¹¹⁶ Even though he had criticisms Seymour was not deflected from his view that private licensed houses offered considerably better conditions than found in pauper workhouses.^h

^g The site of the Red House is now occupied by Swinburne House, one of the 1924 LCC blocks.

^h Marylebone Workhouse was one of the most expensive to run, at 7s per week per head, almost as pricey as an asylum. (Seymour's own figures quoted *SC Madhouses* 1815 op cit 114)

The apothecary John Rogers, sacked by Warburton (see Whitmore House, Appendix B) was not so measured in his criticisms, indeed he was vitriolic about conditions he had witnessed over a 13 year period, visiting “every other day or every day or two or three times a day. I have been there at labours all night.”¹¹⁷ Rogers had another source of information, his sister Mary Humiers, who worked as housekeeper at the White House for three years but had gone to live in France by the time of the parliamentary inquiry. She sent a statement confirming her brothers’ evidence. The hearings of 1816, chaired by Seymour, were triggered by the publication of Rogers’ pamphlet.¹¹⁸

Many of Rogers’ complaints concerned the brutality of the head keeper on the male side, Samuel Ramsbotham. He had seen Ramsbotham beating a patient Captain Dickinson,

who was confined by means of a chain on his legs and handcuffs which rendered it out of his power to ward off the blows, which were repeatedly given him on the face and the body....I witnessed it myself in the company with Mr John Dunston and Mr Talbot; we were looking through the paling of the yard on hearing him call out and saw it.¹¹⁹

Dunston, the senior of the two apothecaries remonstrated with Mr Talbot about the behaviour of his principal keeper but “he shook his head and said he is a cruel sort of man and that he must get rid of him.” Ramsbotham stayed on for well over a year until discharged for another act of cruelty.

Rogers’ sister recalled that Ramsbotham had beaten a Mr Driver, “a respectable farmer”, “with a large thick pair of boots” and had seen him strike patients “hundreds of times”. One of the commonest injuries in lunatic asylums at that time, a direct consequence of brutal forced feeding, was smashed front teeth from objects forced into the mouth to prop it open.ⁱ

ⁱ There is a description of forced feeding Bethlem style, together with a life size illustration of his own patent ‘key’ by J Haslam in *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* 2nd ed’n 1809 London, Callow, 317-321

ROGERS: They have a vessel resembling a tea-pot, sometimes with a very long spout; I have seen it with a very short one; the patient is laid on his back, held down by one or two keepers; one has a cloth in his hand, and the other opens his mouth by means of a key. I have never seen anything else in use except a large key for opening the mouth; the spout of the pot is forced into the mouth, the nose is held by an assistant keeper and the cloth immediately clapped over the mouth; in this state the patient must either swallow or die, unless they desist. I have seen them black in the face.

CHAIRMAN: You have seen patients resist swallowing?

ROGERS: Yes, until they have been upon the point of death; my opinion is that they often poke the spout of this thing too far, and that the food passes down the windpipe, and suffocation ensues.¹²⁰

This technique was employed on “any refractory patient” sometimes 4-5 times a day.

Rogers continued:

I was requested to look into the mouth of a patient...who had been placed there for two or three days, saying that he had been very much injured by Samuel Ramsbotham; on inspecting it, I found a wound in the palate through which some body had been forced, and which I heard he had done with the handle of a wooden spoon, in endeavouring to open his mouth.

Mrs Hodges, the wife of the vestry clerk for St Andrew Holborn, had died of incompetent forced feeding by a cack-handed woman keeper, Mary Seal. According to Rogers Mrs Hodges had been refusing food only one day and was certainly in no danger of starvation when the forcing took place. There were other similar cases. Rogers was sure that Warburton knew of Ramsbotham’s cruelty; he believed that Warburton had often asked Talbot to get rid of him. Talbot told Rogers he was nervous that he hadn’t done what Warburton asked. Eventually, the man was sent away but it was only for a few months and Mr Talbot had him back and made him keeper of the parish patients. There was hearsay evidence that other keepers were almost as bad. Thomas Dalby and a convalescent patient named French had thrashed a man with a piece of bed cord. A knotted cord was used to beat someone else’s bare back.¹²¹

Rogers had a catalogue of other complaints. Pauper patients were left naked on wet straw beds in unheated rooms, soiled straw was unchanged for days; the place was filthy and infested with vermin. Limbs of the frail were “mortified” by cold and neglect, one woman’s foot had to be half amputated.¹²² There was unreasonable use of

restraint, almost everyone was chained to the bedstead at night, pauper women were chained naked, only covered with a hempen rug. Finally, Talbot and other keepers sold good linen from the asylum for their own gain and stole other items from the asylum for their own use.

Warburton was plainly furious with Rogers. He had one observation to make to the Committee about the apothecary's accusations and that was "No further than a direct contradiction to every assertion he has made." Unmoved, Seymour and his committee painstakingly demolished Warburton's defence in half a page of evidence.¹²³ Yes, patients tended to throw off their clothing; yes, the rooms were unheated; yes, a lot of patients were wet; yes, that particular patient had a circulation problem caused by paralysis; yes, Ramsbotham had been dismissed eventually for striking a patient but "He was a man I had a good opinion of." Warburton did not realise he was hanging himself with every word. He was speedily dismissed from the hearings.

Talbot published his own refutation of Rogers' claims, pointing out that Rogers' motives were suspect since he owed Talbot £500.¹²⁴ He dismissed the assault on Captain Dickinson as a natural consequence of the patient's propensity for violence—he had bitten Ramsbotham's thumb. There seems no doubt that there was ill-feeling between Rogers and his employers for some other reason than emerged in public. He was nevertheless the hands-down winner in these public wrangles. Whether he was able to find work again as an apothecary with a lunatic asylum is not known. The penalty today for whistle-blowing is almost always professional rejection.¹²⁵

Round about this time there were alterations to the interior of the White House buildings. Painted panels and 16th century carved chimney-pieces were removed.¹²⁶ Possibly Warburton was trying to make some physical improvements. But there seems to have been little change in the Bethnal Green Asylums regime following publication of the 1816 Report, astonishing though that may seem. One might have expected that Warburton having been so fearful of the enforced closure of his institutions by legislation, that he would be keen to make some major improvements

to ward off any future threat. But only 11 years later, revelations of even more disgraceful conditions were brought to light by visiting parish officers.

The 1827 Select Committee was established specifically to investigate conditions at the Bethnal Green Asylums. Two parish Guardians of the Poor from Marylebone, the Reverend Mr Birdwood and John Hall visited the White House on August 26th 1826 and insisted on visiting an infirmary room where one of their idiot patients was said to be in bed but too ill to come up to the visitors' room to see them. What they saw shocked them. There were "disgusting objects" of humanity, about 6 or 7, chained to the wall lying in cribs, that is wooden boxes, in a semi-naked state, the stench of human excrement so offensive that Birdwood "could not draw breath" and had to withdraw to stop retching.¹²⁷ The existence of this "secret" infirmary was not known to visiting parish officers, no one had ever seen it before.

Hall asked Lord Robert Seymour and Sir Lucas Pepys, the chair of the Visiting Physicians to the Metropolitan Licensed Houses to accompany him one evening to revisit. They went on 26 February 1827. Jennings the head keeper refused them entry. Birdwood later went back with the Middlesex Magistrate, Colonel Clitherow but found the place had been cleaned up. A former parish patient, Webb, told him that the day after Birdwood and Hall's first visit the room had been cleaned and whitewashed. Another patient Nettle said "About 5 o'clock one morning young Mr Warburton came up and they got it all clean." Marylebone Trustees removed all their patients shortly afterwards to Miles' House at Hoxton although they were none too pleased with the new placement either.¹²⁸

The Select Committee heard more about the asylum from former patients, William Solomon¹²⁹ and John Nettle,¹³⁰ who had himself been kept in an infirmary crib for 7 out of 16 months there, testified that dirty patients were chained to their cribs from Saturday night to Monday morning in overcrowded stinking rooms, in order to give keepers Sunday off. The patients were left almost naked save a rag covering, and not even that if they flung it off. Windows were without panes and the patients, who were mostly wet and soiled, suffered terribly from the cold. The Monday morning mopping

ritual, where patients were stood in the yard naked while the keepers mopped them down, throughout summer and winter continued unchanged from the pre-1815 regime. There was one towel allowed per week each for the male paupers but no soap. One patient Wheatly had been beaten while in chains and had been unable to get up when requested to. Barnard, a keeper, told him to get up off the floor, his illness was all sham but he could not answer and the following day he died. Another former patient Anne Gibbons had also been treated at Bethlem and declared the keepers "very kind" there compared with the White House. There was no occupation, no pastimes and barely any medical treatment, certainly no specific treatment for insanity, although the patients may have been grateful for that if they had been familiar with the accepted 'treatments' of the day. There was no resident doctor, the visiting apothecary, John Dunston, visiting twice a week to physick the handful brought to his attention out of the 500 or so inmates. Purgatives were his stock in trade, an unfortunate enthusiasm in an institution without the means to manage incontinence problems.

The parish doctors who visited Bethnal Green regularly all testified that they were unaware of the infirmary and that they saw patients brought to them in a separate room. So Garrett Dillon from St Pancras and W F Goodger from Marylebone felt blamed for not picking up how bad conditions were but how could they have known a room was there if no one ever told them of its existence? And the Visiting Physicians, that is the Commissioners in Lunacy wouldn't have known either because the pauper lunatics were not their concern.

Warburton sent a written statement to the Committee, basically a total refutation of all the accusations. He then came in person to repeat his performance at the 1815 hearings, denying that conditions were bad and blustering his way through in a thoroughly unconvincing manner. One wonders what was going through John Warburton's mind as he watched his father give evidence. He asked the committee if he could be heard, thinking no doubt to retrieve some of the damage and trying to distance himself from conditions in the asylum. He insisted he was not a physician to the Asylum, just a proprietor; he had no medical duties to perform there and did not visit the patients' rooms very often. Unimpressed, the Committee pressed him on

why he did not visit the infirmary.¹³¹ It was Dunston's responsibility, he blurted out, dropping his brother-in-law straight in the mire. 20 June 1827 must have been the most depressing day of John Warburton's professional career. Unpleasant truth emerged from an ill-rehearsed story; his credibility was in shreds.^j

The Select Committee hearings of 1827 were engineered by Robert Gordon MP, Seymour and a number of other interested parties like Clitherow and Sir Andrew Halliday^k who were campaigning for a County Lunatic Asylum. The public had still to be convinced. A *Times* leader in November 1826¹³² had queried whether the expense of a new asylum was justified or whether better regulation of the existing madhouses would serve just as well. But by July 1827 *The Times* was convinced and Middlesex Magistrates were too.¹³³ The notoriety of the Red and White Houses was instrumental in producing the Act for the Regulation of Madhouses 1828 that brought in better regulations for resident medical cover, created the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy and produced some rather complex rules for committing patients to asylums and licensed houses.

By 1831, the White House housed 257 males (138 paupers), 252 females (161 paupers). The Red House, now called by the earlier name again, Bethnal House, under the superintendence of Matthew Davis, had 190 males (156 paupers) and 234 females (199 paupers), making a grand total of 933 for the whole site.¹³⁴ Thomas Warburton died soon after, leaving his physician son John to pick up this overcrowded morass of human suffering, the dilapidated inconvenient buildings, a set of critical annual reports from the new Commissioners, an unenviable public profile

^j Twelve years later John Warburton's reputation was so high he was appointed as a member of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Conditions at Hereford Lunatic Asylum but he did not attend any of the hearings and was replaced with Wakley. (**Report of the Select Committee on Hereford Lunatic Asylum** 1839 PP Lunacy vol 2 Select Committee Members p ii, Proceedings p vi-viii)

^k **Sir Andrew Halliday** (1781-1839), former personal physician to William IV and Inspector of Hospitals in the West Indies 1833-37, was a seasoned campaigner on Licensed Houses. He collected material on the numbers of lunatics for the 1806-7 hearings and in 1827. He published a monograph on the number of lunatics in each county, having gone round all of them himself. Part travelogue and part inquiry, it is methodologically hopelessly unsound. (1829 *A Letter to Robert Seymour with a Report of the Numbers of Lunatics and Idiots in England and Wales*). The Dictionary of National Biography dismisses his several other medical publications on tropical diseases etc. as "almost valueless".

and, but its a very convenient 'and', a sizeable fortune, a thriving business and the two newly appointed enthusiastic and high-minded physicians.

One of the new physicians was Charles Beverley, FRS. What on earth was he doing here? He needed a job and John Warburton needed someone distinguished to 'turn round' the institution's reputation. Warburton's ambitions for respectability coupled with Beverley's administrative talents produced the transformation of the asylums over the next 15 years. Charles James Beverley, 1788-1868 is categorised in the Dictionary of National Biography as a 'naturalist.'¹³⁵ His biographical note ends: "went into private practice in London. Lived to 80yrs, died 1868." The private practice was Bethnal Green Asylum. Recruited round about 1830, he remained there first as superintendent of the White House and later as superintendent of the whole institution, for the rest of his working life. The second surgeon appointed to the Asylum was James Phillips, who seems to have handled all the correspondence with parish officers about admissions, discharges and bills.

John Warburton was in his thirties, already making a name for himself as physician to St Luke's and managing proprietor of Whitmore House. He moved in highly respectable circles within his profession, having married the daughter of Abernethy,^m the flamboyant Barts surgeon. Within a short time Charles Beverley was appointed

¹ Born a Scot and educated in Edinburgh, **Charles Beverley** joined the navy as an Assistant Surgeon in 1810, serving in Baltic and Mediterranean stations for four years. After his performance at the Capture of Porto d'Anzo in 1813 he was recommended for promotion but his health was failing and he was sent home to recuperate, saling as medical attendant with the sick and wounded. He recovered and served in HMS Tiber to 1818, when he was given the opportunity to serve under Sir Edward Parry in his first expedition to the Polar Regions. They were away from 1819-20, over-wintering on Melville Island, Beverley spending most of his time cataloguing botanical specimens. He was promoted to the rank of Surgeon and awarded FRS in 1821 as a result of his botanical work. An attack of ophthalmia prevented him from taking up the offer of Surgeon to the naval flagship stationed in Barbados and eventually ill health forced him to retire from the navy. He was by then bitten by the exploration bug and went as a volunteer with Parry on his voyage to the seas around Spitzbergen in 1827, working on the flora and fauna of the arctic islands.

^m An impressive larger than life marble bust of **Abernethy** watches magisterially over the postgraduate teaching centre at Barts. If 1827 was a bad summer for John Warburton it was a terrible one for Abernethy, whose annual lecture series had been published in the *Lancet* and then rubbished by Wakley in the most intemperate manner as being 50yrs out of date. Abernethy was also accused of trying to secure his son succession to his post at the hospital and sell his lecture spot for £14,000. Wakley's persecution of Abernethy by vilification and ridicule may well have been justified. Discourse was perhaps a little tense round the Warburton/Dunston/Abernethy dinner tables in July and August 1827.

Medical Superintendent of the whole asylum. Over the next 15 years, Bethnal Green Asylum was transformed into a most remarkable institution, the best in the metropolis, the new national Commissioners in Lunacy believed. So impressed were they with the transformation that a whole chapter was given over in their Special Report of 1847 to documenting the process of change.¹³⁶

When the new medical attendants were first appointed they found 70 of the 400 or so patients invariably in irons; there was no bath, no library, little or no employment; no means of amusement, a small and inefficient staff—about one to fifty patients, “that rooms were defective in cleanliness, warmth and general comfort; that parts of the Asylum were damp and offensive from want of drainage, that the infirmaries were small, ill-ventilated and inconvenient; that the meat and vegetables were not of the first quality”...and so on and so on. The new Commissioners documented in minute detail the subsequent process of change over the following fifteen years. Good management, kindness, an orderly regime, good sense and tolerance had taken over. There must have been huge management effort to shift the culture of the asylum, to treble and train the staff, to transform the treatments and daily routine. The numbers of patients were halved from the 1827 inquiry figures. In part this was because of the opening of Hanwell and control of the numbers for which the Asylum was licensed by the Metropolitan Commissioners. This is the description of the new library:

From there being no library, it will be seen first,-That books are purchased; that these are placed under the care of a patient and that all the patients, pauper and private have access to them. In 1835 a library of 500 books had been collected for them;...and at present we understand that it consists of 2,000 volumes which are accessible to all classes and are much used.

John Warburton also set about rebuilding the physical environment. The new Bethnal House Asylum was built between 1841 and 1845 at considerable expense, the new buildings costing about £22-23,000. (The average Victorian Workhouse cost £10-12,000). The Red House was redesigned internally and used exclusively for males. The old White House was demolished and new accommodation for 150 pauper females built. There are photos taken in the 1870's of this ivy-clad, pleasant Georgian

House of 1843, renamed Bethnal House. John Warburton died in 1846 and never saw his life's work applauded in print. He may not even have realised that Bethnal Green's transformation *was* his life's work. We shall probably never know whether the inspiration for the changes came from Beverley or Warburton; it was the two of them together who made it happen. Shaftesbury's new Commissioners thought so too:

The foregoing facts will show what good may be effected in an Asylum, originally bad in almost every respect and still without the advantages of a good site, where the supervision is regularly and carefully made, where the medical attendant is skilful and willing to attend to useful suggestions, and where the Proprietor is liberal enough to carry them out at any reasonable expense.

John's physician son and heir to the business, John Abernethy Warburton, died young only four years after his father. The bulk of his property was left to set up a trust for the benefit of his surviving daughter and his son Thomas Frederick Warburton. In due course the asylum business was passed down to his son, who was also Thomas Frederick Warburton.^{n 137}

The Asylum had leased part of the Poor's Land for a recreation area from the eighteenth century. The Poors Land, that is the Green, remains more or less today as it was in 1678 when 8 local householders bought the land to retain it free of buildings, the income from it to be used for the benefit of the poor living around the Green. The Asylum lost access to the land when the LCC bought the land from the Poors Land Charity Trustees in 1891, exchanging various small parcels of land with the Warburton Trustees, including a coal yard and some piggeries.

During the 1890's there were more building alterations and modernisations, including the constructions of a new block in 1896 still standing and in use as Bethnal Green Library. In 1909 the Borough built Bradbeer House dwellings just next to the eastern

ⁿ There is a note from **Arthur Morris** in the Tower Hamlets Archives that this last Warburton was a lunatic. When Robinson consulted Morris about this in 1976 they concluded there was no evidence, but "I am an old man in my 88th year and my memory is not so good". It is possible that Morris confused the Warburton story with the Monro story, the last of the Monro's having been certified and maintained in the family asylum Brooke House.



Fig 3.6: 34 Hoxton Street, surviving part of Hoxton House Asylum

Photograph, E. Murphy 1999

boundary wall which overlooked the airing courts so the proprietors raised the wall and built a 'cottage' against it, which strange edifice is still there in the middle of the Bethnal Green Estate. In April 1919, shortly after the licence was renewed there was still a contract "for the continued care of 25 male Middlesex paupers." Presumably those that had been placed there many years earlier when Hanwell and Colney Hatch were full had remained there as the residuum of that huge anonymous tub of human souls who had been consigned to this worst and best of asylums.

Hoxton House Asylum (Miles'). The LCC built a new school on the site of Hoxton House Asylum, acquired from the last asylum proprietor in 1902 and not unnaturally called Hoxton House School.¹³⁸ Set high up on the wall, a large terracotta name plaque can just be seen through the railings of the spanking new Hackney Community College on the back of the old school buildings which now form part of the college. Just a few doors down at 34 Hoxton Street stands a tall four storey late nineteenth century house; this is the only surviving part of the old asylum (See Figure 3.6 opposite).

The journalist and impresario John Hollingshead, who styled himself on occasions *Johannes Hoxtoniensis*, writing in 1895 looking back to his childhood, described Hoxton House as "a large brick house on the right coming from the City in a line with Curtain Road."¹³⁹ He remembered as a child being able to look out of his bedroom window in a neighbouring house over the gardens that patients used. His great aunt, Sarah James was once employed there and was later engaged to look after Mary Anne Lamb at home. Arthur Morris's classic monograph on the Hoxton Madhouses¹⁴⁰ covered the period of the Select Committee hearings of 1815-16. Morris's original sources have been re-examined for this account.

Mary Lamb's first confinement at Hoxton House was in 1803.¹⁴¹ At the age of 32, in 1796, during a deluded rage she had fatally stabbed her mother. Hurried into a private asylum in Islington, her brother Charles had her made his ward and quickly removed her to private rooms in Hackney where with domestic help he looked after her himself with the occasional help of friends, including the poet Coleridge. Mary's bouts of

frank madness lasted from several months to a couple of years, the later episodes gliding into the next so that she was rarely completely sane. It is doubtful that she ever recovered sufficiently from the first attack to live independently.

Charles did not describe her madness well in his letters but referred to the warning signs, her misery, withdrawal, her awareness that her mental state was deteriorating.

¹⁴² ¹⁴⁵ Coleridge visited the house on 29 March 1803 while Charles was away for a few days. He found Mary in what he considered to be a far too dangerously disturbed state to be left in the house alone, gathered her up and took her straight to Hoxton House, where she remained until 20 May. Charles frankly thought that Coleridge had acted too hastily and should have waited for his return. But her subsequent readmissions between 1805 and 1810 suggest that he was not displeased with the care she received. Mary's progress was conveyed to Charles by letter: "Mary still keeps very bad. I have not seen her, nor do they let me see her until she is getting pretty well."¹⁴⁴ In his next letter to his friends the Clarksons he goes on: "She was a little mending when I enquired last on Saturday; you shall have the earliest intelligence of her restoration". Mary herself did not write of her experiences in any of the licensed houses she was confined in and while we can deduce that Charles respected the advice he was given about Mary he tells us nothing of his views on her care.^o

Charles was sufficiently satisfied with Hoxton House to retreat there himself for at least one period of mental turmoil. He wrote to Coleridge "The six weeks I finished last year and began this your very humble servant spent in a madhouse at Hoxton. I am somewhat rational now and don't want to bite anyone. But mad I was and many a vagary my imagination played with me enough to make a volume if all told."¹⁴⁵

^o **Mary Lamb** had several spells of relative mental quiescence. During one in September 1816 she and Charles took a holiday staying in a house in Dalston (now the heart of the Hackney Turkish community). He wrote to Wordsworth (Letters vol III, 320) "[We] are absolutely rustivating (o' the gentility of it) at Dalston, about one mischievous boy's stone throw off Kingsland Turnpike, one mile from Shoreditch church, there we emanate in different directions to Hackney, Clapton, Totnam and suchlike romantic country. That my lungs should ever prove so dainty as to fancy they perceive difference of air. I am purging off the foul air of my once darling tobacco in this Eden"

James Hadfield, George III's deranged would-be assassin whose sabre-sliced frontal lobe had left him in a state of unpredictable deluded aggression was also an inmate of Hoxton House in the early 1800's. After he knocked down and unwittingly killed a fellow patient Ben Swain at Bethlem, Hadfield was transferred to Hoxton where he was lodged with a number of other criminal lunatics from Newgate.

Charles and Mary Lamb belonged to only a handful of private patients. In 1803 there were about 200 parish paupers and 66 naval patients (5 officers and 61 seamen) paid for by the Navy Sick and Wounded Board.¹⁴⁶ By 1814 trade was buoyant; on 27 October that year the Visiting Physicians noted 150 navy patients (17 officers and 133 seamen), 89 private patients, 245 parish paupers plus a handful of naval and military lunatic pensioners transferred from Greenwich Hospital and Chelsea Hospital. Finally there was a sprinkling of French prisoners of war, who were also the responsibility of the Navy, making a total of nearly 500 patients in all.¹⁴⁷

The conditions in which the naval lunatics were confined were the subject of much discussion internally in the Navy medical establishment. The outspoken critic of Hoxton House, who refused to be deterred by his former colleagues on the Sick and Wounded Board from publicising his views, was Dr John Weir the first Inspector of Naval Hospitals, appointed in 1806. By 1812 he was tired of having his repeated recommendations ignored. In most matters he found it more efficacious to discuss the matter directly with the asylum superintendent Watts. Letters to the Board rarely produced a timely response. His damning report of 1812 was quietly sat on for six months. Another 18 months past before it came to the attention of the Admiralty.¹⁴⁸ The Admiralty's own investigations led to the matter coming before the parliamentary Select Committee in 1815-16.

Hoxton House had become an asylum in 1695.¹⁴⁹ The Miles family bought the business in 1715¹⁵⁰ and extended the capacity in 1756 when Jonathan Miles the elder bought two large houses in Hoxton Street.¹⁵¹ When the Select Committee turned their unforgiving searchlight on the stinking straw rooms, wooden box cribs and squashed 'three in a bed' dormitories, the unfortunate current proprietor was Sir Jonathan Miles.

Miles was born in the House and grew up there, inheriting the business from his father in 1772. He expanded the business again in 1784.¹⁵² Miles became a City alderman, Sheriff in 1806, knighted in 1807 and Master of the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1815, the year he appeared before the Select Committee.^p

Miles had been absent for the better part of four years when the disastrous Navy Report of 1814 was made public. He began to attend the asylum regularly again, rushing hither and thither rather ineffectually, amending a few procedures, putting right a few inconsequentials, building a partition wall or two but making no fundamental changes to the regime. Miles was floundering around in seas too deep and choppy for his intellect to cope with. His trade competitor, Thomas Warburton comes across as a bombastic but canny vulgar entrepreneur whose business sense suffocated any finer feelings he might have started life with but Miles seems to have been more buffoon than villain; he just didn't have a clue about the trade he'd inherited. There is something farcical about Miles' pathetic attempts to tidy the place up and separate the rooms and exercise grounds of the officers from the seamen and other private patients, who were confined randomly together, dirty with clean, officer with tradesman, captain with common sailor.^q

^p **Miles'** rather badly executed portrait hangs in a corner of the Painter-Stainers' livery hall court room, donated by him in 1815 when he became Master. The picture is of a youngish, perhaps 30's or 40's Regency fop, blonde quiff, ruddy self-indulgent fleshy cheeks, hooded eyes and a vacant, self satisfied expression which may owe more to bad art than bad character but fits well with the not very bright absentee landlord of the Select Committee. The portrait was originally full length but was chopped down in the 1960's. His father presented a silver punch bowl to the Company inscribed with his name.

^q Gullible's Travels: Poor **Jonathan Miles**. The best clues to Miles' personality lie in the hilarious saga of his attempts to win a parliamentary seat, mentioned by Morris in a footnote. Having first stood for Barnstaple and got trounced, he was approached by a Cornish publican by the name of Middlecoat who offered to bring him to parliament in the forthcoming elections of 1806 for the safe Whig seat of Tregony (one of the rotten boroughs), for a fee to defray election expenses of 4000gns. In the event this didn't unfortunately prove sufficient to cover Middlecoat's burgeoning expenses; Miles paid out "a large sum in notes to make up the doceans (*sic*) agreed upon". Election day produced a magnificent majority Whig poll for Miles and his co-candidate John Nichols but curiously the Returning Officer, Mayor Joseph Hannah, found "all the good votes rejected and all the bad ones admitted for the opponents". Miles was induced to pursue the blackguard Hannah and protested against the victors Wentworth and O'Callaghan taking up their seats. He got leave from Parliament to submit evidence of improper electoral practice. The ever-helpful Middlecoat suggested he employ a Truro solicitor, Edwards. Another £2,500 was handed over to prepare his case. Edwards engaged two eminent but pricey London lawyers, Thomas Plumer and Serjeant James Pell, to put the case. The day of the hearing was fixed; neither Middlecoat nor Edwards turned up. There were no other witnesses prepared. Parliament dismissed the case and the victorious two took their seats. Middlecoat, Hannah and Edwards were between them over £10,000 richer. The House of Commons Journal (vol 62, p12) accepted that "the returning officer had been guilty of most corrupt partiality in favour of Wentworth

The Miles business was officially owned by family trustees who administered Miles' estate, although Miles seems to have had a large measure of control if he wanted it. James Birch Sharpe, the surgeon employed at Hoxton house, believed he was paid by Miles but later realised his salary cheques were signed by John Watts on behalf of Banks, Farrand, Trustees.¹⁵³

The Navy began contracting with Messrs Miles and Kaye' for the confinement of lunatics in 1791, or possibly even earlier, conveying 10-20 new patients a year up to 1814. Most came from the naval hospital at Haslar or direct from the hospital ship Batavia. Since most were incurably chronic by the time they reached Hoxton, the numbers accumulated in a satisfyingly lucrative fashion. In the early years of the contract from 1791 to 1806 the naval patients were visited from time to time by a Commissioner from the Sick and Wounded Board or from the Transport Board. Dr Blair, for example, submitted the following report of his visit on 5 October 1798:

examined the provisions, accommodations and general state of the patients; the bread, beef, cheese and beer were all remarkably good and the patients I examined, among whom were four who lately made their escape, declared they had them in plenty. The accommodations were also very clean and well aired and they have sufficient airing ground for walking in the open air; in which last respect these accommodations have greatly the advantage of Bethlem Hospital.

The principal defect in institutions of this kind arises from the convalescent patients not being separated from those in a deranged state. If such separation could be made and the patients were to have the opportunity to inspect the regulations of the house and particularly that which requires their confinement for some time after an apparent return of reason, in order to guard against the consequences of relapse; and if in this state they were also allowed to lay their complaints freely before the Board (which at present is not suffered in any case) I do not see in what further respect the situation of persons in their unfortunate circumstances could be materially improved. R. Blair.¹⁵⁴

and O'Callaghan". I wonder how much they shelled out to Hannah and possibly also to Middlecoat. Miles didn't risk standing for parliament again. [Serjeant Pell, a resident of Somers Town, was a Guardian of the Poor in St Pancras and one of the instigators of the Select Committee on Madhouses in Middlesex in 1827. There was also a madhouse proprietor by the name of James Pell who kept a licensed house for up to ten patients in Weston Row, Somers Town. Could this be the same man?]

Not much to complain of there, although we cannot know what standards Dr Blair expected. This is the report however of someone who has listened to individual patients and has a fair-minded approach to their views. It seems likely that he would have picked up major abuses and obvious ill treatment.

Conditions seem to have deteriorated after 1800. Dr James Harness the defensive and arrogant Chairman of the Sick and Wounded Board was dismissive of criticisms. It was clearly he who blocked Weir's 1812 report and repeatedly refused to discuss Weir's recommendation that the patients should be removed from Hoxton altogether.¹⁵⁵ Harness had never found fault on his occasional visits between 1800 and 1806; men sleeping in double beds was unfortunate but what matter if a man had only 2 feet of sleeping space? On board ships of war men were only allowed 14 inches! Harness had no objection to mixing officers and seamen in the same apartment if there was no room for an alternative. In his opinion conditions had vastly improved over the ten years leading up to the Inquiry. Besides, Harness did not think conditions at Hoxton were the Navy's concern; in his opinion the patients were under the 'control' of the Visiting Commissioners from the Royal College of Physicians while on shore. This notion, rapidly rebutted by Weir, was in part correct in so far as conditions for private patients were inspected, albeit rather cursorily, by the Visiting Physicians. Harness's denial of responsibility did nothing to endear him to the Select Committee, who proceeded to watch him squirm while they dug him deeper into ludicrously unacceptable postures about the paucity of medical care, the appallingly oppressive regime, the straw beds, the over-crowded airing courts and inevitably, the cheapness of the contract. The Navy paid 14s a week for seamen and 17s to 1gn for officers (the pauper rate was from 8s to 10s 6d depending on the parish). For the Navy this was cheap, for Miles it was an excellent rate since the seamen were getting the same care and no more treatment than the paupers.

The fundamental problem at Hoxton House was overcrowding. The inexorable growth in numbers of both navy and parish patients between 1800 and 1815 resulted in bodies crammed cheek by jowl in close oppressive compartments; staff could not

¹⁵⁵ Kaye is not mentioned after this date.

cope with the numbers and the building could not be further extended on its cramped urban site to accommodate more. Like Warburton Miles never turned down a patient; he also paid Haslam the Bethlem apothecary £100 retainer to make sure he mopped up Bethlem's extruded incurable patients at the end of their first year. The use of leg manacles, handcuffs, chains and straitjackets became routine at Hoxton, allowing a handful of staff to watch over an immobilised gaggle. For safety's sake no cutlery was used. Weir remarked "It is impossible to conceive a more uncivilised appearance than they exhibit at their meals". There did not seem to be any cruelly sadistic practices as there had been described at Warburton's establishments, a rumour that suspicious deaths had been hidden was found "not proven". The shambolic conditions were more the result of poor management and thoughtless ignorance.

Weir had a poor opinion of young Sharpe's casual and inattentive attitude; he was rarely around when Weir called. Sharpe pointed out that Weir always came at 'dinner time' and never asked for him. He was paid only for 'corporeal care' of the 500 or so inmates and made no pretence about treating mental disorder. Miles got 4d per head from the Navy for the sailors' medical care but this did not include any specific treatment for mental disorder until in 1814 Miles employed James Veitch, a retired naval surgeon as part of his general improvements in the run-up to the Inquiry. Sharpe was appalled at the results of Veitch's heroic interventions and highly sceptical of their curative powers. He had witnessed a month in which Veitch had prescribed "11 blisters, 5 bleedings, 425 mercurial pills, 8 set-ons, 670 powders of calomel and digitalis and 5 cuppings". Patients slumped weak and salivating into lethargic stupor. Veitch's enthusiasm for large quantities of drastic potions caused more work for Sharpe; they were unable to agree. After six months working together, Miles sacked Sharpe, unwittingly creating the Select Committee's perfect witness. At the hearings, Sharpe made all the right points about the need for specialist asylums but failed to engage the sympathies of the committee by somewhat random observations and criticisms. His youth, inexperience and poor political nous let him down. His shabby

performance didn't stop him from publishing his own edited version of the Select Committee hearings.^{156 s}

Miles did not lose his licence as a result of the Inquiry. John and Elizabeth Watts kept their jobs. The naval lunatics were not removed. It was many years before the splendid naval asylum at Haslar was opened. Miles already had his knighthood. Even posterity was kind to him: the archives of the Painter-Stainers' Company list him as a 'gentleman' and had no record of his connection to the mad trade until 1997. The numbers of patients were reduced temporarily after the Inquiry although that may have been at the insistence of the Visiting Physicians or the Navy, and some improvements were made. Miles lived in his later years at Castlebear House and Park in Ealing and died sometime before 3 May 1824.¹⁵⁷ Hoxton House acquired a new proprietor William Wastell.^t

The numbers of patients were up again to 325 paupers and 95 paying patients by 1830. John and Elizabeth Watts were named as joint superintendents on the Commissioners Returns.¹⁵⁸ The Metropolitan Commissioners found the asylum "In good order" in June 1830, "Alterations going on will enable noisy patients to be moved" and on a return visit the following month they were pleased that "Friends can now visit 6 days /week."¹⁵⁹ The next visit in April 1831 found:

Those parts of the establishment which have been appropriated to the pauper patients appear cleaner and well-ventilated as possible, the Commissioners however feel they wish to express their very strong disapprobation of the state in which they find that portion of the Buildings called the Cottage under the care of Mrs Hewlett. [At 2.00pm.... they] found them close and offensive and the cribs used there by female patients of a superior class then remained in the same wet and filthy condition in which patients sleep.¹⁶⁰

^s **John Birch Sharpe** born 1789 lived at 5 Myrtle Street, Hoxton, son of the parish surgeon William Sharpe, Parkinson's predecessor. He later published *Elements of Anatomy for Artists* and in 1832 *A Manual of Auscultation and Percussion from the French of M. Laennec*. He was a parish Trustee of the Poor for Shoreditch in the 1830s.

^t **Wastell** is an uncommon name. There is an old family-owned corner shop in the back streets of Hoxton whose proprietor is William Wastell (1999). There was also a William Wastell, age 21, in the printed outdoor relief list of St Sepulchre Holborn City Division in September 1819 (ms 3273 Vestry Clerk's Accounts and Diary 1806-20).

This sounds more or less the same old Hoxton House. Things began to improve somewhat in the mid 1830's, but the Commissioners' Reports swept up all together the four Metropolitan pauper lunatic houses, two at Bethnal Green, Hoxton and Peckham in their annual reports. In their 1835-6 Report they mention "improvements maintained.... Increased attention to cleanliness and ventilation..., to classification in the wards and to providing occupations and amusements."¹⁶¹ There was "no great change" the following year and the next "Occasional complaints by paupers of the quality and quantity of food ...Commissioners visited at the hour of dinner - bread, meat, cheese and beer provided was good quality and quantity. Satisfied there is no reasonable ground for complaint". They complained in '38-39 that paupers were rarely visited by parish officers or relatives and that the inconvenience and expense of returning paupers to distant parishes "not infrequently occasions his being improperly continued in confinement". They noted the major movements of pauper lunatics from the Metropolitan Licensed Houses to the new Surrey County Lunatic Asylum and to Hanwell in 1840-41.

By the time the national Commissioners in Lunacy came to office in 1845 Hoxton House had a new superintendent and was in "a far different state". 410 patients were attended by 7 male and 13 female staff, there were two resident medical officers (required by the 1828 Act), "the dormitories were clean, all the windows glazed, none crowded," the diet was good, baths were available and they concluded "the present superintendent has made a difference."¹⁶²

Hoxton House Asylum continued to provide care for some paupers from all over the south of England, just as Bethnal Green Asylum did, for many years after the Lunatics Act of 1845. Three elderly patients for example were moved from Hoxton to the new Oxfordshire Asylum at Littlemore in 1849, two were from Berkshire.¹⁶³ There must have been many similar transfers as new asylums opened but those that were admitted before the Act that made it obligatory for parishes to use the County Lunatic Asylums often remained there. Hoxton House finally closed in 1902.



Fig 3.7: Burrows or Holly House. Watercolour by T.H. Shepherd in the late 1830s. Copy Hackney Archive, Acc. HAD. Workhouses and Asylum

Holly House (Burrows) Generally referred to as Mrs Burrows', sometimes spelt Burroughs', Holly House was owned by John Burrows who ran the business jointly with his wife Esther. After his death, their son George William Burrows (not to be confused with his contemporary, the mad-doctor George Man Burrows) joined the business and appeared in the official returns as proprietor but the institution was always referred to locally by her name.

The buildings of Holly House were three separate houses in Hare Walk.^u (Illustration Fig 3.7 opposite). The visiting surgeon was James Parkinson. He would have walked past Holly House on the route home from St Leonard's Shoreditch Workhouse,^v where he was parish surgeon to the workhouse infirmary, to his home in Hoxton Square. In 1819 there were 119 patients;¹⁶⁴ the house expanded to accommodate 140 in the 1830's before it closed, of whom 100 were paupers, a quarter to a third belonging to St Leonard's Shoreditch and the rest from parishes all over London and the south of England.¹⁶⁵ Cashman quotes a letter from a Bedfordshire overseer to Theed Pearse, Clerk to the Bedford Asylum Visitors:¹⁶⁶ "Sir, We have a Woman by the Name of Jane Webster wich is at Mrs Burrows at Oxten wich wee intend to send to the Silom at Bedford as soon as she can conveniently be Gott Down".

Burrows' is not so well described as the other Hoxton Licensed Houses because it avoided being the object of complaints brought to the attention of the Select Committees of 1807, 1815/6 and 1827. There is some evidence that it was for a time at least a rather better institution than the Hoxton madhouses owned by Warburton, Miles and Dunstan. It is referred to several times in the Select Committee minutes of evidence but only in passing. Both Sir Jonathan Miles and Thomas Warburton were asked if they had visited Burrows; neither had. Mrs Burrows was then charging eleven shillings a week for pauper lunatics; Miles was asked why he only charged eight shillings, the implication being that he was too cheap compared with Burrows; even Warburton was charging 10s at Bethnal Green, but Miles had no explanation.

^u Hare Walk remains as a cut through from the Kingsland Road to Hoxton Street but now threads its way through an LCC estate.

Edward Wakefield, naturally, had visited Burrows on one of his many reconnaissances of Hoxton madhouses and must have kept notes, so detailed were his recollections:

This is an old house extremely inconvenient for the purpose, but still the parish paupers are kept distinct from patients who pay at a different rate and there are several attempts at classification. At the end of one of the yards there is a distinct building for the male parish paupers; the general treatment I conceive to be like that of the other houses where they take parish paupers. I examined some of the men in a convalescent state, as to their food, who stated in the strongest way that they had plenty. The rooms had all been mopped down as they were at Talbots. There were the same sort of trough beds where the patients were chained at night.¹⁶⁷

Wakefield's description doesn't sound particularly good. The College of Physicians Commissioners in Lunacy noted that Burrows was "greatly too much overcrowded" on 7th November 1816 and "the houses are old and all accommodated to their present purpose and the pauper divisions are too much overcrowded" on 16th November 1821.¹⁶⁸

By 1824, after Mrs Burrows' death, the Commissioners complained bluntly "this house is much out of repair and ill-managed."¹⁶⁹ The Commissioners expanded on this in their evidence to the 1827 Select Committee, saying the houses lacked warmth and comfort. In contrast, Sir James Williams and Sergeant Pell, the two St Pancras Guardians of the Poor whose horrifying observations of conditions in which their paupers were cared for at Bethnal Green had triggered the Committee Inquiry, contrasted Burrows favourably with the appalling conditions at Talbots (the White House, Bethnal Green), "cleaner, better managed and less crowded."¹⁷⁰ It looks as if Holly House was marginally the best among a bad bunch and it probably deteriorated after Esther Burrows' death.

The Commissioners noted its closure with some satisfaction:

Holly House, lately abandoned for the reception of the insane. The circumstances has not however been a source of regret to the Commissioners inasmuch as the buildings

^v Morris had a commemorative bronze plaque to **James Parkinson** put up in St Leonards, recording his dates and post at the workhouse, noting Parkinson's paper on the Shaking Palsy through which he achieved immortality in his eponymous disease

from their situation and character were never well adapted to the purposes of such an establishment and latterly they had fallen into a very decayed and dilapidated state.¹⁷¹

Burrows' was the most expensive of the local private licensed houses that admitted parish paupers. The Trustees of the Poor of St Leonards became concerned about the rising costs of their placements (£96. 18s 0d for the Michaelmas Quarter 1814).¹⁷² There were 22 paupers out-posted there from the Workhouse in January 1815, so the Trustees sent a party of four with James Parkinson to visit Burrows' to reassure themselves that the cost was justified.¹⁷³ They continued to send patients there so presumably they accepted the cost. How much this decision was influenced by Parkinson himself is not clear, nor whether there was a pecuniary interest for Parkinson in the parish maintaining lunatic paupers there.

Parkinson was both parish surgeon from 1813 and visiting surgeon to Holly House, a position he held from at least 1806. It was an unusual state of affairs that he was responsible to the parish for the care of the paupers and to the proprietors for the care of both pauper and private patients. In the 1820's until 1832 St Leonard's contracted 20 beds for lunatics at Burrows. If they were full the overspill went to Miles' (Hoxton House).¹⁷⁴ After Hanwell opened, after some delay and consideration of costs they sent 9 patients together to Hanwell in 1832.

Early Nineteenth Century Metropolitan Pauper Farms.^w Prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, small City parishes placed their poor who required indoor relief in 'pauper farms', privately run institutions sited around the fringes of the City in Hoxton, Islington, Southwark, Bethnal Green and Mile End. They were often in close proximity to the private madhouses, the 17 City Livery Almshouses and

^w It is not clear how pauper farms came to be called farms since most of them were just large institutional buildings with no agricultural activities at all, although Byas' had land attached. There were farms in rural areas owned by vestries for placing able-bodied workless paupers. At Sissinghurst, Kent the old castle buildings were used as a poorhouse and paupers farmed the land. (Information provided to visitors at Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, National Trust).

^wPatrick Colquhoun, a City magistrate told the Committee "About 5000 are vomitted out of gaols, without character" in London every year (SC on Mendicity 1816 op cit 115).

numerous other asylums for the deaf, dumb, blind, orphans, fallen women and destitute former prisoners¹⁷⁵ that clustered outside the square mile as convenient receptacles for the diverse classes of incompetent poor. Tipple's is shown just north of Hoxton House Asylum on Hoxton Street on Wilkinson's 1823 map of Hoxton.¹⁷⁶

These farms had been flourishing since the mid-eighteenth century. St Faith under St Paul, a typical small City parish with no poorhouse of its own, recorded placements at pauper farms from 1775- 1832.¹⁷⁷ The parish contracts shifted as follows:

- March 1775-1779: poor in the house of Messrs Sykes and Newells, Mile End
- 1817: Overtons, Deacons Mile End; Willis' in the Boro'
- 1820-1831: Deacon's Mile End; Sutton's Islington; Willis' Borough.

Even large parishes like St Sepulchre and St Anne Blackfriars sent difficult or unpleasant characters to pauper farms. The following examples appear in St Sepulchre Relief lists in 1828-9.¹⁷⁸

- Ann Murrell, passed from St Andrew above the Barrs 3 Jan 1829 Feb 9 To prison one week for outrageous conduct, afterwards to Perry's FH.
- Sarah Banbury April 6 1829 Sent to Fry and Fitch's FH very bad conduct.

Reading the minutes of the Trustees it is clear that being sent to a pauper farm was in part a punishment, the threat of going to one a deterrent. Paupers sometimes chose not to go if offered a 'farm' rather than the parish poorhouse preferring to make their own way outside the poorhouses as best they could.

These 'farms' were also used by East London parishes for placing people who while not designated insane were considered unable, through weakness of intellect or vulnerable personality, to work and required more supervision than could be provided in the workhouse. The mildly idiotic, the simpleton and the soft-headed could be farmed out more cheaply than any asylum would cost. Weekly charges were

usually 5s to 6s per week. One of the most popular institutions in East London was Grove Hall in Bow, known locally as Byas's (see below).

Tipple's, Deacon's and Robertson's are mentioned frequently in the minutes of the Trustees of the Poor in the City parishes.¹⁷⁹ St Botolph Aldgate, one of the larger parishes, farmed out all their paupers until they built their own workhouse in the 1820's. In 1800 they had 73 at Overton's at Bethnal Green, 112 in 1803.¹⁸⁰ They also placed paupers at Deacon's in Bethnal Green, Mr Sutton's "Citty (sic) Farm House" in Islington (34 between 1811 and 1814), 70 or so at Mr Thomas Willis' worsted manufactory in Southwark between 1813 and 1820. St Andrew Undershaft used Tipple's as an overspill placement when the parish poorhouse was full, placing a handful there between 1803 to 1807. St Andrew Trustees were unusual in visiting their paupers at Tipple's personally every week until 1807 at least. Most parishes sent their officers, usually one of the beadles, to visit the farmed out parish poor from time to time.

Most of our knowledge of these institutions comes from the oral evidence of the proprietors to the 1815/6 Select Committee on Mendicity in the Metropolis and from visits made by two of the Committee, Robert Gordon and Sir John Anstruther.¹⁸¹ In spite of sitting for two months and taking evidence from 43 witnesses, then reconvening a year later to hear more, George Rose's Committee felt unable to write more than a 15 line paragraph final report, forbearing "to express any opinion as to the measures it may be fit for parliament to adopt, for a cure or an alleviation of the evil". He hoped "that their labours have already been productive of some good." The best known pauper farmers were summoned to give evidence because of the suspicion that paupers from these establishments were allowed out to beg during the day, swelling the burdensome numbers of indigent inebriate Irish, professional petty pilferers and habitual 'knocker beggars' importuning from house to house along the streets of the City.

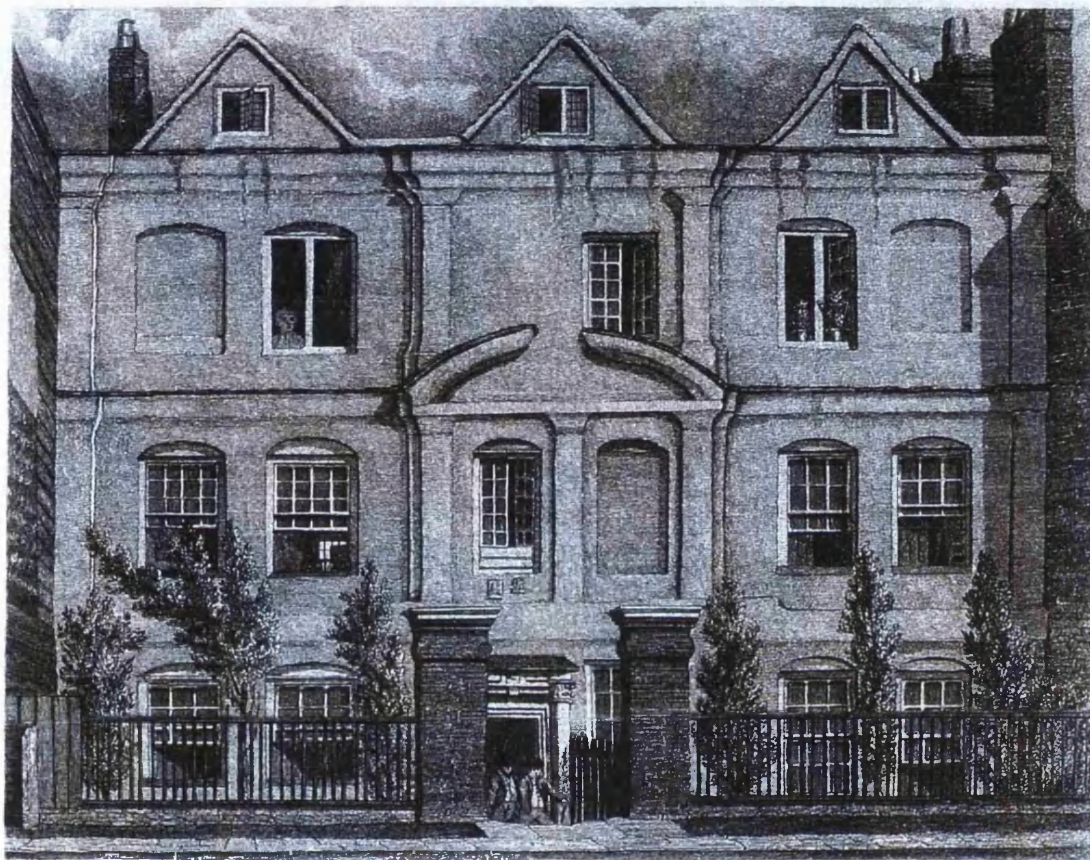
James Robertson was the first to be called to give evidence.¹⁸² He gave his address as "125 Hoxton," which was within a hundred yards of Miles' Hoxton House and

Tipple's, just down the road from the back entrance to St Leonard Shoreditch workhouse. In fact Robertson had been at one time the workhouse master, where he had learnt presumably the necessary skills of the pauper management business. He kept 300 paupers from 40 different City parishes at a cost of 6s per week. Robertson and his wife ran the entire institution themselves, with a few servants "to do the slavery work" and appointed some female paupers as nurses for the old and infirm. A woman pauper, "a good scholar", was paid a shilling a week to teach the children to read, if the children were so inclined.

The house, "built as a gentleman's seat", was surrounded by an acre of garden and a quarter acre of airing ground. Men and women slept in separate rooms, two in a bed usually but sometimes three. Anstruther and Gordon found Robertson's:

extremely crowded, there generally being from nine to ten to eleven in a room; ..when the beds were let down there was no vacant space in the room. There was extreme filth throughout the house; no classification of paupers...we found there was a practice went on, which is called slating, which is of this kind; if a pauper sends in the morning to the master of the house, stating that he does not wish for his dinner that day, he allows him twopence halfpenny; they seem to be allowed to go out on merely asking leave.¹⁸³

There was heating in the house only from November to February and the paupers complained of persistent hunger. Robertson claimed that inmates were not allowed out during the week at any time, only the nurse had the privilege of attending church on Sundays and a brief outing on Saturday. The doors were kept locked. Leave on compassionate ground was occasionally granted but normally, inmates' entire lives were confined within the institution. Inmates worked, Robertson said. He claimed he had sewing work subcontracted from local men with government contracts. It brought in about £150 per year, Robertson keeping two thirds of the earnings and distributing one third to the individual worker inmates. The diet was not dissimilar from standard workhouse fare; beer and porter were allowed but no spirits. Many inmates were too old and frail to work. The majority had been servants in the City before falling on hard times in old age.



ST JOHN'S HOUSE, HORTON with a PLAN of its ENVIRONS.
FARM HOUSE for CITY and other POOR kept by Mr Thomas Tipple.

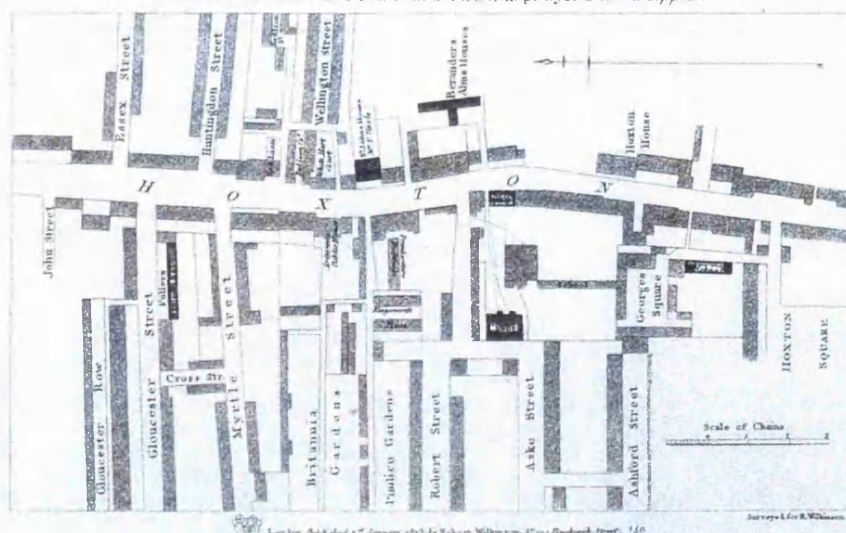


Fig 3.8. Farmhouse for City and other poor kept by Mr Thomas Tipple. LMA Acc. 9758

Robertson's pauper farm, from his own account, sounded little different from many parish-run metropolitan workhouses of the same era until the matter came up of dealing with the noisy and riotously inclined. "We have a little dark hole; we threaten them with that". Further pressed, Robertson admitted that inmates were put in the hole "when they have got a little in the head in the holiday time, perhaps when they go out." Robertson's punishment hole clearly shocked the Committee; "the black hole" cropped up repeatedly in the Inquiry afterwards.

Thomas Tipple also had his pauper farms at Hoxton, at 12 Queen Street (see minutes of the overseers of St Andrew Undershaft quoted chapter 4, p93) and another in Hoxton Street, together providing 230 places during the summer months but able to squeeze in nearly 300 in winter. Tipple's was used by 17 City parishes and some small out-of-town rural parishes.¹⁸⁴ Tipple inherited the business from Jonathan Tipple, who took a lease on the Great White House (also called St John's House) in Hoxton Street (see illustration ^{Fig. 38} opposite) as a pauper keeper in 1811.¹⁸⁵ Tipple's charges fluctuated with the price of a quartern loaf, the price being fixed at the cost of 6 loaves, although he admitted the charge rarely dropped below 6s per week. He got work from the local clothing slop trade, did some silk winding but many of the inmates were too old and frail to work. Unlike Robertson, Tipple admitted he was not particularly careful of his charges' whereabouts. He was happy to let them wander out during the day even though it was forbidden in the rules. He estimated there were fifty out of the house the day he attended the Committee, possibly some indulged in begging but he thought not frequently. Tipple's glib nonchalance before the committee suggests that he knew very well that his paupers were supplementing their income through begging.

The individual who farms the poor has an interest very much to his advantage to permit those people to go out... There is an understanding between the farmers of the poor and the poor themselves; and the individual who receives six, or seven, or eight shillings a week for the board of these paupers may give them two shillings and let them have the week to beg in. In some instances they take lodgings out of the district where they are farmed and come home only on certain days when they expect a muster and that the parish officers will come and look at them.

This accusation by William Hale, a Spitalfield silk manufacturer and local Trustee of the Poor seems quite likely to have been accurate.¹⁸⁶

The physical environment at Tipple's Queen Street House was similar to Robertson's, a converted old house with 17 single sex wards, a large yard but no garden, sleeping arrangements were as at Robertson's. The children were sent to a separate establishment Tipple owned at Tottenham. There was an infirmary ward for the sick and very frail, but no lunatics were sent to Tipple's. Gordon and Anstruther found Tipple's rather cleaner than Robertson's but even more crowded. There were a number of overspill houses in ordinary courts where pigs roamed among the filth. Unsupervised paupers came and went at will. The practice of slating was rife and considered necessary by the paupers to provide themselves with soap and candles, which were otherwise denied them. There was no visible work that the Committee visitors could see. Tipple's was still taking paupers at St John's House in 1823 but some of its rooms were lodgings for local poor people and one room had become a Wesleyan Methodist Bethesda Chapel. The business was long gone and the building demolished in 1845.¹⁸⁷

Edward Deacon had two pauper farms, one at Mile End with 350 inmates and one at Old Ford with 170, serving 40 parishes in the City and the neighbouring parishes of Poplar, Blackwall, Barking and the Minories.¹⁸⁸ Deacon charged 6s per week like his competitors. Both 'farms' had large 2-3 acre gardens but again, no real farming was done; the work available was sewing for the local garment trade. There were no infirmary wards at Deacon's. Every Wednesday he sent the sick in a carriage to Guy's Hospital to be seen and if they couldn't get in there he sent them to St Thomas' the next day. Deacon employed a doctor to attend the houses every day however and also had clergymen from all the relevant religions attending the houses to conduct prayers. Two in a bed was the norm at Deacon's as elsewhere. Gordon and Anstruther found the house at Mile End in a filthy overcrowded state.

Paul Cadmer owned a small pauper farm at Number 14, Carter's Rents, Little Trinity in the Minories, keeping 6 paupers for three different parishes.¹⁸⁹ Cadmer charged only 5s per week. He had space for up to twenty, he thought. None were lunatic.

While it was the largest pauper farms that were singled out for criticism in the Select Committee on Mendicity Report of 1815 there were many other pauper farms around London. Thomas Willis' Worsted Manufactory in Southwark, jointly run for part of the early 19th century with Fry, took able-bodied parish poor. Willis sent on any paupers who were sent to him as able-bodied but proved to be unable through feeble-mindedness, laziness or obstinacy to be capable of work, to another 'farm', a flax mill in Hounslow. Others were Thomas Sutton's pauper farm in Islington, Overton's in Bethnal Green and Barclay's at Bow, which later became Byas'.

None of these institutions were proper agricultural farms. They were combined poorhouses and 'old poor law type' houses of industry providing a convenient and relatively cheap service for Trustees of the Poor of small parishes. They also mopped up the winter excess of seasonal workers in London, jobless and dependent on relief for perhaps 2 months of the year, for whom there was no justification to build a parish house even in the larger parishes.

The parish Trustees knew conditions at Tipples and Robertson's were bad long before the Mendicity Report exposed them to a wider public. Mr Boak, the parish beadle of St Andrew Undershaft visited Jonathan Tipple's House on Christmas Day 1807 to see their handful of paupers. Mr Boak "stated that on a visit to the poor at Mr Tipple's house on Christmas Day last he found the accommodations very bad and thought it expedient they be removed."¹⁹⁰ The beadle had consulted with "some gentleman of the parishes of St Peter and St Michael Cornhill" and found that they hired a house at Bethnal Green (Deacon's, Overton's?) where they maintained their poor and this institution would be willing to admit the poor of St Andrew Undershaft "on the same plan". After a series of joint meetings and visits to Bethnal Green "Pond-side House," financial negotiations were finally settled in early June 1807 and the decision implemented on Midsummer Day.

The pauper farms were victims of the rise in pauperism in the post French war period. Once there were sufficient paupers in a parish to justify the maintenance of a parish-owned poor house, there was no business left except for those with a particular willingness to take paupers unpopular or unsuitable for parish houses like the refractory, the idiotic or the chronically insane. Byas' institution at Grove Hall Bow made an unusual transition into a lunatic/idiot asylum. Many pauper farms struggled on until the Poor Law Amendment Act, taking "persons whose character is so bad that they are excluded from the society of thieves and prostitutes of the regular workhouse."¹⁹¹ By 1832 some of the pauper farms had as many as 500 inmates. The Royal Commission Report of 1834 noted that Mr Willis Fry's * establishment in Lombard Street, Mint, with 270 places had "many discharged convicts."¹⁹² Fry had a separate establishment for women taking another 120 people. Mr William Pattinson Perry's 'City Poor-house,' in Lower Road Islington, which had been established 34 years earlier, could take up to 500 persons although in the early 1830s he only had 300.¹⁹³ Perry graded his wards according to the behaviour of the inmates, reserving the best environment for the well-behaved. Perry also had a "black hole" where violent miscreants could cool off for two or three hours, an idea he perhaps adopted from Robertson. Both Fry and Perry provided work, Fry manufactured worsted stockings; Perry had 'slop work' and feather stripping, for which he got paid 2d per pound and claimed to give the working pauper 1½d. Perry and Fry both complained of the increase in drunkenness brought about by the reduction in gin tax but felt that they could manage most bad behaviour quite well, Mr Fry even thought reasoning with the paupers was effective.

In spite of trying to provide a specialist service aimed at the 'peculiarly unattractive' parish pauper, the pauper farms lost their trade when the Poor Law Amendment Act obliged unions to build workhouses for all classes of poor. Some turned to other 'farming work' to fill the void; Grove Hall is a prime example.

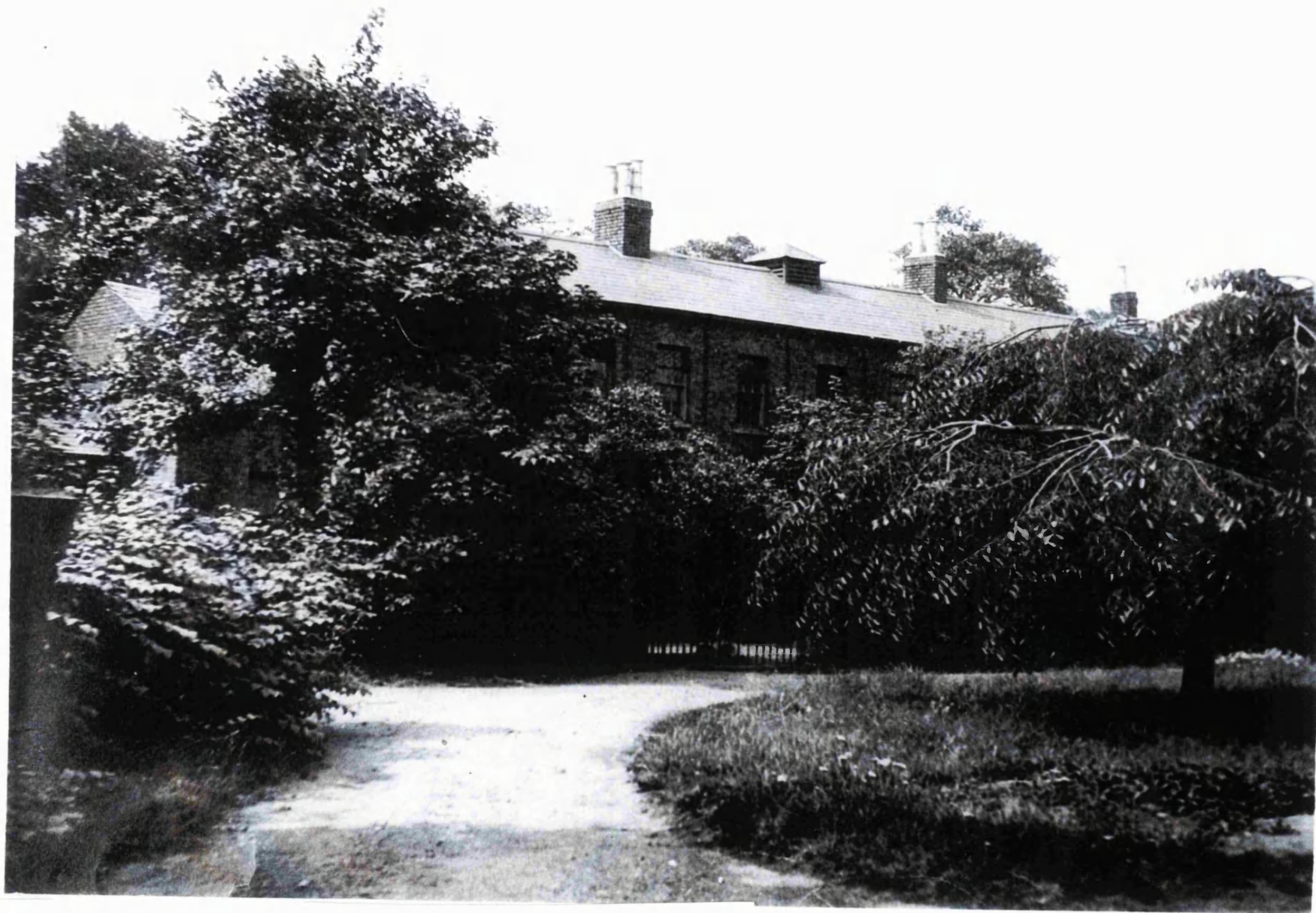


Fig 3.9(a): **Grove Hall Asylum, Bow** photograph Tower Hamlets Archive c 1900



Grove-Hall Establishment.

Near Bow Church, Bow, Middlesex.

For providing Board and Lodging for Persons of both Sexes
possessing small annuities, pensions in the Army, Navy & other Government departments,
superannuated public and private servants, and persons of limited income.

This Establishment is particularly adapted for the reception of those who, from
improvidences, intemperance or other causes, are dependent on their friends.

The various trades and pension societies will find this a comfortable asylum for their
pensioners, where the weekly allowance is not sufficient to maintain them in a private home.

The inmates are divided into classes, in which care is taken to associate them according
to their habits or infirmities with separate and spacious pleasure grounds.

There are also Apartments for the accommodation of Females preparatory and
during their confinement on very moderate terms.

Principal Entrance: - Fair Field Road, Bow Road.

Inmates' Entrance: - Old Ford Lane.

Tables of Dietary.

First Class, Twelve Shillings per week;

including washing & a separate bed.

The Dietary of this Class is quite equal to that of a respectable tradesman, viz.

Breakfast	Coffee and Bread and Butter.
Dinner	Roast or Boiled Mutton with Vegetables & ½ pt. of Beer.
Tea	Tea and Bread and Butter.
Supper	Bread, Cheese, and Beer.

Second Class, Nine shillings per week including washing and a separate bed.

Days	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Sunday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Monday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Tuesday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Wednesday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Thursday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Friday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Saturday	½ oz. Bread	½ pint of the Soup	Cheese

Third Class, Six shillings per week including washing.

This Class is quite distinct from either of the others.

Days	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Sunday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Monday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Tuesday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Wednesday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Thursday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Friday	½ oz. Bread	5 oz. Cooked Meat ½ pint of Beer	Cheese
Saturday	½ oz. Bread	½ pint of the Soup	Cheese

Each Person to provide themselves with Towels, Knife, Fork, and Spoon.

Fig 3.9: (b) Advertisement for Grove Hall. Inside cover, The Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees of the Poor of St Mary Islington 1851. P91/ISL/ 1549.

Grove Hall, Bow

Of all the nineteenth century institutions for lunatics and idiots in East London, Byas's is the least well known, overlooked perhaps because it was not officially licensed as an asylum until the late 1840's, by which time it had 300 inmates.¹⁹⁴ By January 1849 it had 400, of whom 391 were paupers.¹⁹⁵

Grove Hall started institutional life as Edward Byas's pauper farm, specialising in the refractory and idiots, taking from the City parishes' Trustees the recidivist simpletons and incompetents who could not or would not work in the various labour intensive projects devised for the more compliant poor. Byas was willing to take the barely manageable, slow-witted paupers who couldn't keep up the pace of workhouse routine and the useless, quietly eccentric nuisance who did not quite fall within the overt 'lunatic' category.

Byas was in business as a pauper farmer at Bear Lane, Christchurch, Surrey^y with Sophia Poulain in 1834, but had formerly been living in Shoreditch High Street.¹⁹⁶ He already had an interest in the pauper farm at Grove Hall where he was working with Dr Archibald Barclay, the leaseholder of the property.¹⁹⁷ Byas took over the lease in 1836 and in 1841 he and Sophia Poulain, the 'Matron,' split the business 50:50 as "partners in the art and trade of farming parish poor." The drawings and plans of 1836 show a plain Georgian style house with a large extension on one side marked 'schoolroom.'¹⁹⁸ (Illustration ^{Fig 3.9(a)} opposite shows Grove Hall institution in the late nineteenth century).

Byas' house was cheap, far cheaper than any other asylum at about 5-6s a week in the 1840's although the charges went up as it turned more into an asylum and less a pauper farm. These early years are perhaps the most interesting. What did Byas do with his paupers at this curious institution? By 1842, Whitechapel Union was using Byas routinely for the care of idiots in preference to the workhouse although John

^x Willis Fry was surely the offspring of a union between the Fry and Willis families?

^y Byas' House in Bear Lane was probably the same institution as Showell's Poor House in Bear Lane, Southwark .

Liddle the parish doctor responsible for visiting them was dissatisfied with their care:
"The house is not clean or orderly."¹⁹⁹

The Guardians continued to place a handful of paupers at Grove Hall at a cost in 1845 of 11s a week, the same cost as Hoxton House and Peckham and pricier than Hanwell's charge of 8s 9d. In Stepney, when the Poor Law Commissioners made it clear that there was a requirement under the new Act of '45 to remove treatable lunatics from workhouses to asylums, the 'Master' Mrs Megson and the medical officer Daniel Ross pressed for the 13 lunatics in Wapping workhouse to be sent to a proper asylum. They were shipped off to Byas' because there was no room either at Hanwell or at any of the other local institutions.²⁰⁰ It seems that it was round about this time that Grove Hall assumed the role of just another private lunatic asylum for paupers.

In 1845 an untoward incident resulted in the death of a patient. The new Lunacy Commissioners, seizing on the incident to test their powers, took legal action. The case had been brought to their attention on their visit to Grove Hall that year by Dr. Palmer, the Medical Superintendent. "Two male superintendents of the names of James Davis and Samuel Garrett ...had been guilty of great cruelty toward a pauper lunatic of the name of William Rank by violently striking him and otherwise maltreating him and thereby occasioning his death." Palmer conducted the post-mortem, finding multiple traumatic bruises and fractures. During the court case it emerged that Rank was extremely and unpredictably violent, on one occasion trying to strangle Garrett. Davis intervened to save him but Rank lunged at Garrett again and in the ensuing effort to control him, Palmer and Davis retaliated with excessive force, breaking Garrett's bones by beating him and fracturing his skull. Both keepers were found guilty of manslaughter on 13 May 1846.²⁰¹ The more senior got six months hard labour, the other three.

An advertisement for Grove Hall pasted into the front of the 1851 minutes book of the Trustees of the Poor of the parish of St Mary Islington (see ^{Fig 3-9(b)} illustration) makes no mention of lunacy or mental frailty of any kind. The establishment was for:

providing board and lodging for persons of both sexes possessing small annuities, pensions in the army, navy and other government departments, superannuated public and private servants and persons of limited income. The Establishment is particularly adapted for the reception of those who from improvidence, intemperance or other causes are dependent on their friends. The various trades and pension societies will find this a comfortable asylum for their pensioners where the weekly allowance is not sufficient to maintain them in a private home. The inmates are divided into classes, in which care is taken to associate them according to their habits or infirmities with separate and spacious pleasure grounds. There are also apartments for the accommodation of females preparatory and during their confinement on very moderate terms.

In 1851, the first class charge was 12s per week to include washing and a separate bed, second class was 9s also with washing and a separate bed and third class, "this class is quite distinct from either of the others," cost 6s to include washing only. In other words, parish cases would be allocated the still common double beds. All inmates had to provide their own towels, knife, fork and spoon. It seems that Byas' could mop up a wide range of social misfits and troublesome relatives fallen on hard times.

Grove Hall remained in the ownership of the Byas family until the 1870's, passing from Edward J Byas to Edward Hegley Byas.²⁰² Dr Alonzo H Stocker became the registered Medical Superintendent in 1854 and he seems to have set about raising the tone of the establishment. The number of patients was reduced to 360 by 1859. When the Government decided that year to transfer its military lunatics from their own establishment at Great Yarmouth to a private asylum, because they wanted to use the Royal Military Asylum as a general hospital again, they chose Grove Hall on the grounds of cost in preference to one of the public institutions. The Lunacy Commissioners were travelling round the country advertising the superiority of public provision and pressing the moral inferiority of the profit motive, supported in their crusade by the 1845 Act that insisted counties and boroughs must henceforth use public asylums when available. Meanwhile the ministers to whom they were accountable were shuffling 74 patients out of a public asylum into a private one.²⁰³

Parry-Jones comments on the paradoxical nature of these conflicting legislative and government policies.²⁰⁴ An editorial in the *Asylum Journal* the year before criticised the government for their contradictory stance but the government saw nothing wrong in taking advantage of the fortuitous vacancies left in private asylums as a result of the '45 Act. Indeed they thought the adoption of pragmatic economies was consistent with their responsibilities.²⁰⁵ It was acknowledged that Grove Hall “enjoyed the marked favour of the Commissioners in Lunacy”; certainly the Commissioners had no serious complaints in the 1850s.

The local council demolished Grove Hall in 1907 and the land acquired for a public park. Grove Hall Park remains one of the few public green spaces in the area, just off the Blackwall Tunnel cross-route, 100 yards away from Bryant and May's impressive Gothic folly match factory. The park backs on to warehouse buildings and factories that may date back to 1820 or so. One corner of the park is occupied by old people's sheltered flats built by a housing association in neo-Georgian almshouse style circa 1990.

The Voluntary Hospitals

St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics. St Luke's Hospital was founded by public subscription in 1751.²⁰⁶ The Hospital subsidised admissions of patients whose relatives could afford to make a contribution but who could not stretch to the more expensive licensed houses. Just north of the City on Old Street, the splendid facade by George Dance^a hid a gloomy and oppressive interior. ^{see note 'a' overleaf.} The hospital was a prototype for the later county asylums. One of the driving forces behind its establishment was the society physician and mad-doctor, William Battie, who owned other small madhouses in Islington and Clerkenwell. St Luke's 300 beds played a significant if modest part in the mixed economy of institutional care for lunatics from East London parishes between 1800 and 1845.

The hospital emerged more or less unscathed from the parliamentary inquiries of 1815/16, probably, Scull thinks, because two of the Committee members were Governors of St Luke's.²⁰⁷ Wakefield²⁰⁸ and William Tuke²⁰⁹ both described a cheerless, cold, dirty, dark place where restraint by chains, leg-locks and straps was the norm. "Dirty patients were without any change of clothes"; they were kept in bed all day while their clothes were washed. The Master kept violent patients in bed "not above four or five days at a time."²¹⁰ The walls were "excessively filthy" and had not been whitewashed for five years. The day rooms were crowded, ill ventilated and "highly offensive". Only half the required number of attendants was in post; there was no classification and no activities for the men.²¹¹ The environment had improved by the 1827 Inquiry but "four to five out of each gallery of 35 were under restraint."²¹² The picture is much the same as other lunatic asylums in London mentioned in the Select Committee reports.

The Steward (head keeper) in the early nineteenth century was Thomas Dunston, father of John Dunston, apothecary to Whitmore House and son-in-law to Thomas Warburton whose son John Warburton later became Visiting Physician to St Luke's. Thomas Warburton was a Governor of St Luke's.

St Luke's, like Bethlem, only took recent onset cases and discharged patients after one year if uncured. They retained some private paying incurables at a special reduced rate^b but most were extruded back to their parishes or home. Not surprisingly given their selectivity, the Hospital claimed a higher than usual cure rate of about 52% when the provincial licensed houses claimed a third cured, the metropolitan licensed houses could only muster 13% and the county asylums 15%.²¹³ Conditions had improved markedly by 1847. The new Lunacy Commissioners found it clean, the number of attendants had been doubled in 1830,^c only one patient was physically restrained.²¹⁴ The main problem was the stench that pervaded the female airing yards from St Luke's burial ground next door.^d

From 1801-1835 East London parishes used St Luke's for pauper lunatics believed to be curable. Local families with modest resources were assisted to place suitable patients. Parishes frequently paid the whole bill for a year, although the local numbers declined slowly from 361 in the decade 1801 to 1810 down to 143 in the period 1841-50 (see Table D6, Appendix D).²¹⁵ From 1830, worried about falling trade, probably a result of the opening of Hanwell, the parishes were charged a flat admission fee of £4, private individuals, who were supported by charitable funds £1, a reduction from the previous £2. To attract a wider clientele, the residential area for those giving securities was extended from the bills of mortality to the area covered by the two-penny post.

After 1834 no parish poor were admitted as incurables. By 1830 half the patients were from outside London, a trend considered desirable by the Governors. The flat rate fee for private patients was dropped altogether in 1838 because the hospital was attracting insufficient patients. The parishes' use of St Luke's ceased abruptly after the 1845

^a Dance's building opened in 1787, the second on the site.

^b Rate for incurables remained the same from 1830 to 1856 at 7s per week.

^c There were insufficient staff in 1831 to prevent the death of an inmate James Green who was "suffocated and violently beaten and bruised in the absence of his keeper by another patient". **Coroner's Inquest Report** MJ/SPC/E4802 no 92, 24 March 1831. All the figures quoted here were supplied by the Archivist, St Luke's Woodside, extracted from the admission registers, the Minutes of Meetings from the **General Court and House Committee Minutes** 1801-1855.

^d The old burial ground is now a pleasant lunch spot for office workers from Old Street. On the old hospital site now stands St Luke's council estate.

Lunatics Act, only 8 East London patients being admitted between 1846 and 1850. Table D6, Appendix D records the numbers admitted from local parishes where the vestry was probably responsible for arranging admission. The nearby parishes of St Leonard Shoreditch and St Luke Old Street were by far the most common purchasers, but all the local parishes used the hospital to some extent.

population. It is likely that geographical proximity was a major influence, an example of Jarvis's 'Distance-decay Law' of asylum utilisation.²¹⁶ Shoreditch and St Luke's parishes however, administered the poor law under local Acts long after other East End parishes had formed Boards of Guardians. Old style purchasing habits were sustained longer in these parishes.

Guy's Hospital Lunatic House

Thomas Guy, wheeler-dealer bookseller and philanthropist, was specific in his will about the functions of the new hospital, which he funded but never lived to see. "My mind is that they receive and entertain lunatics adjudged or called as aforesaid incurable, not exceeding 20 in number at any one time."²¹⁷ ^e A ward was set aside in the first hospital but a separate building for lunatics was opened in 1744. A new 'lunatick house' run by Mr Shepherd was opened in 1790. From May 1805 until its closure in 1860,^f only women were admitted.²¹⁸ ²¹⁹ The 4 remaining males were transferred to Bethnal Green Asylum.²²⁰ The parish of origin was not recorded in the admission register for lunatics after 1823, possibly because no more parish patients were admitted. There were 8 female lunatics in the register of 1831²²¹ who had been admitted between 1803 and 1823 with parishes of origin in East London. Guy's Mad House only took incurables so the inmates usually stayed for many years.

^e Guy was a Governor of St Thomas' Hospital. Distressed by the eviction of incurable patients after one year's treatment at both St Thomas' and Bethlem he wanted his new hospital, built opposite St Thomas', to take in evicted incurables of the Borough. Unfortunately there was a final clause in his will which allowed the hospital to admit recently ill patients if necessary, quickly undermining Guy's original intentions.

^f Shepherd's House is commemorated in the rehabilitation department on the same site south of the main building. There was no designated provision for the mentally disordered at Guy's between 1860 and 1940 when the first psychiatric unit to be established in a teaching hospital in the twentieth century, the York Clinic, was opened, again as a result of a benefaction.

The new Lunacy Commissioners were shocked by the basic, uncomfortable conditions they found in 1845.²²² They demanded a resident physician be appointed as required by the 1845 Act. The Hospital reluctantly asked William Gull to take it on, a good choice since he was interested in nervous diseases.^g As the Commissioners' criticisms mounted year by year, the Governors' desire to close the lunatic ward grew.²²³ They finally achieved the necessary act of parliament in 1860 and transferred the remaining patients to Bethnal Green Asylum.

Bethlem Hospital. Bethlem is the oldest institution in Europe for the care of mentally ill people. It has recently been the subject of a comprehensive 'biography' and a detailed account here of the Hospital in the nineteenth century would be redundant.²²⁴ In fact this ancient asylum figures only occasionally in the East London parish records of the early nineteenth century, sometimes in conjunction with its sister City institution Bridewell.²²⁵ It disappears almost entirely from the Guardians' records after 1834. The invisibility of Bethlem requires explanation.^{h226}

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, paupers between the ages of 20 and 50 made up the majority of Bethlem patients. Most were women.²²⁷ Bethlem was expensive however; charges were double that of the competitor private licensed houses and procedures for admission tedious. Application was made to the office at Bridewell where the Assistant Overseer would declare which two parish officers would act as security for payment of the fees (which had to be paid in advance). They had to enter into a bond to guarantee the patient would be removed when the Governors requested

^g Gull is best known for his introduction of the term anorexia nervosa (**Gull, W** 1874 *Anorexia Nervosa: apepsia hysterica, anorexic hysterica*. Transactions of the Clinical Society of London 7: 22-28); he was also the first to describe myxoedema (**Cameron** 1963 op cit 110 note 6)

^h The buildings of Bethlem in Moorfields were not at all invisible. John Thomas Smith said, even when the buildings were being demolished in 1815, that it was "the only building that looked like a palace in London". (**Andrews et al** 1998 op cit 411) There is now a plaque on the old Moorfields site on London Wall. A new Bethlem was built in St George's Fields, Southwark in 1815. The London Hospital, Whitechapel was approached to see if they might house the inmates pending the rebuilding but they refused on the grounds that "receiving lunatics at the house would be a complete subversion of the principles upon which the Hospital is established" **Clark-Kennedy** AE 1962 *The London Hospital*. London Pitman vol 1, 196.

discharge and promise to pay for clothing and burial if necessary. Parishes also paid £3 4s for bedding.²²⁸ The bond in the cases mentioned in Chapter 4 were all round about £3 to £4. Having signed up to the bond, the Overseer would take the patient to Bethlem to be examined by a committee of governors and physicians. If accepted, the patient was admitted there and then, if not the parish officer had to bring them back to the parish. It was a tedious, expensive business and Bethlem was generally full and had a long waiting list.

Nevertheless the parishes continued to place people occasionally at Bethlem in the old poor law period. The number of patients at Bethlem fell from 266 to 119 between 1800 and 1814 because some buildings became completely uninhabitable.²²⁹ After the new building opened in 1815 the capacity expanded to 364.²³⁰ Throughout the century Bethlem moved away from the care of paupers. With the development of the County Asylums, Bethlem was obliged to look to change its admissions policy because there were insufficient patients of the poorer classes applying. Then after 1851, under the direction of the physician Charles Hood a conscious effort was made to raise the social tone of the establishment.²³¹ There had been restrictions in the criteria for admission for years but in the nineteenth century the rules were followed rigidly. There must be no patient who had been insane for longer than a year, none discharged from other asylums, none who were very well-off (they were expected to go to Ticehurst or other private houses like Brooke House and Northumberland House), no pregnant women, no “lunatics in a state of idiocy, afflicted with palsy, or with epileptic or convulsive fits,” no “lunatics having the venereal disease or the itch,” no blind or those “weakened by age;” even those with a crutch or a wooden leg were excluded.²³² Only a smallish percentage of the motley crew of parish lunatics in East London would have qualified on these criteria. For the parishes, Bethlem was too expensive, too exclusive and too much trouble.

Hood’s campaign to attract “a higher and more educated class of people” more or less precluded pauper insane patients after 1852. The City of London Corporation, coming under increasing pressure from the Commissioners in Lunacy to construct their own asylum, set up a special committee in 1858 to establish whether “the government and

funds of Bridewell and Bethlem are administered in accordance with their original intent”.²³³ They discovered to their serious chagrin that they had no power to compel the Governors of Bethlem to admit pauper lunatics. Working class people with small funds continued to be admitted under their charitable auspices but there was no regular relationship between Bethlem and the local Boards of Guardians at all except for criminal lunatics.

From 1816, after prolonged negotiations with the Government, two small blocks were added to the new Bethlem for reception for the criminal insane. Since the fees were paid for directly by the State, ‘home’ parishes were exempt from the fees but when, as occasionally happened, a patient recovered and was discharged, their care reverted to their home parish. In 1863 with the opening of the new State Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Broadmoor, contacts between Bethlem and the London poor law authorities were minimal.

For those parish paupers who were admitted in the early nineteenth century, conditions were as poor as in most other asylums. In 1800 the medical care of inmates was nominally under the direction of Thomas Monro, who took over from his father as visiting physician in 1792 (see Brooke House, Appendix B). His approach to therapy was to modify the regime of potions and purging established by his father using the same general approach on the grounds that it was expected. He had no faith whatever that any specific medicines could cure.²³⁴ In practice treatment was left to his subordinate, the apothecary, John Haslam. Appointed in 1795, Haslam was content to follow the generally accepted purging and bleeding but was less keen on some of the more bizarrely unpleasant cures like whirling, cold douches and head blisters and had a notion that talking with patients and the new ‘moral management’ were more important.²³⁵

Conditions at Bethlem were savaged in the Select Committee on the State of Madhouses in 1815, Edward Wakefield being the ‘chief prosecution witness’ (see above and Whitmore House, Appendix B).²³⁶ Reform followed, slowly at first and always in a conservative fashion but “between 1815 and 1851 it was very much an

institution of its time, full of contradictions and trying to adopt new psychiatric ideas.”²³⁷ Trying perhaps but not very successfully: non-restraint was adopted reluctantly, attendant numbers were increased slowly compared with other lunatic institutions and the medical staff remained conservative in approach.²³⁸ There were further allegations of ill-treatment in 1851 which lead to the appointment of Charles Hood as Resident Medical Superintendent and to the Institution coming within the remit of the Lunacy Commissioners, in line with all other institutions for the care of the insane.

Chapter 4: Managing Insanity under the Old Poor Law

Thomas Bakewell, proprietor of Spring Vale Asylum and campaigning sceptic of the County Asylum movement,²³⁹ wrote to the Select Committee of 1815 to "make out a case for the unfortunate tribe of lunatics".²⁴⁰

Great numbers of those afflicted with insanity are kept from all timely means of recovery by the ill-judged parsimony of Parish Officers, who only regard present expenses, and a still greater number by the folly and wickedness of their nearest relations; nor do I suppose that one half of all of those that become insane are ever put into any Mad House either public or private: they are to be found in gloomy cells of Parish Workhouses, in dark Closets, or cold Garrets of Private Houses, uttering execrations against their Relations and the Almighty; or they are suffered to stroll about to the great terror of the inhabitants, in every situation equally unprotected.²⁴¹

A similar picture of parish 'care' had been painted to the Select Committee of 1807 by the philanthropist Sir George Paul, who had travelled the length of Britain examining first prisons and then receptacles for the mad, including parish workhouses and lock-ups.²⁴² Pointing out that 18th century legislation on lunatic vagrants from 1714 and 1744 was concerned largely with the security of the public, not "the care and relief of the objects", he was concerned that the current law "overlooks the situation in which the whole class of pauper lunatic are in fact placed, that is those whose own effects are not sufficient to pay or whose friends or parishes will not pay the cost of the keeping in the Licensed Houses".

These two activists naturally stressed the shocking in order to rouse the reader to action. In reality the quality of care may not have been as uniformly bad as they implied. Their descriptions do however outline the ways parishes dealt with insane paupers throughout the old poor law period. They could be maintained at home by relatives, boarded out with other people at the family's or parish's expense, looked after in the parish workhouse or lock-up, sent to a private licensed house or to one of the few lunatic hospitals. Alternatively they could just be left to roam about, colliding from time to time with the local Justices when they became a public nuisance. Porter concluded, "most queer folk remained in their parish, under the watch of the family, community and overseers".²⁴³ *Ad hoc* local solutions were devised as the occasion

arose; parishes dealt with the mad under the old poor law without the benefit of statutory guidance.

Insanity scarcely appears in most 20th century studies of the old poor law. The focus of the Webbs' *magnum opus* (1927-29) and others subsequently was the diversity of approaches by which the able-bodied poor were dealt²⁴⁴. As Dunkley²⁴⁵ pointed out, the poor law research agenda was determined by the preoccupations of those who framed the Amendment Act of 1834, which aimed for the moral regeneration of the able-bodied workless poor above all other categories of pauper. The sick and aged poor were referred to only in passing in the Royal Commission Report on the Poor Laws which preceded the Amendment Act, even though the able-bodied consumed only from one third to one half of the poor relief in 1832.²⁴⁶

The old poor law period, covering two centuries of economic growth and retrenchment, major population expansion and transformations in the rural and industrial geography of Britain, can scarcely be expected to yield up a tidy pattern of policies on managing the mad. The sheer diversity of cultural attitudes to social welfare across time and place that have emerged from recent scholarship suggests that few generalisations are possible²⁴⁷. Geography and period are crucial contexts for understanding parish decisions. The picture that emerges from a handful of studies over the period 1600 to 1800 is a scattering of tantalising dots still waiting for the lines to be drawn between.

Fessler²⁴⁸ studied seventeenth century quarter session records from 30 Lancashire parishes. The Justices usually responded to family petitions about lunatic and idiot relatives by ordering family members to provide care and granting them an allowance to do so, which they could spend on hiring someone to look after the disordered person at home. If more protection of others was thought necessary, parish officers or the local constables would be ordered to provide secure lodging and supervision, in a keeper's house or a House of Correction. In only one case did the Justices consider sending the lunatic to Bedlam in London. Rushton²⁴⁹ excavated 100 lunatic and idiot paupers from the quarter session reports and parish records in Northumberland and

Durham from 1600 to 1800. Before 1700, domestic care was adopted universally for idiots, who would usually be supported financially by relatives and only by the parish purse when the caretaker descended into poverty. Rushton detects that this matched the general expectation and desire of relatives. Lunatics, in contrast to idiots, whether perceived to be dangerous or not, were deemed to require control. This was provided largely by gaols and Houses of Correction in the early period, later in madhouses and workhouses

In Berkshire, Essex and Oxfordshire, a moderately benign if uncoordinated system of parish support emerged from Thomas' study of parish records from 1720-1834.²⁵⁰ If the case was fairly harmless, the overseers gave allowances, at Woodford for example, 2s 6d to Matthew Finkle for the care of his idiot son, "provided he employs a proper person to look after him". Disturbed behaviour warranted control by locking up and sometimes restraining chains but the aim of this, at least on occasion, was to get the person transferred to a madhouse in London or to Bethlem, at the parish expense. Less frightening but nevertheless seriously disturbed paupers might be boarded out with a person in the parish accustomed to taking in disturbed sick paupers.

Recent work suggests that parishes in the north and west of England were, with notable exceptions, rather more inclined to rely on family support for the dependent sick poor and less likely to resort to public provision of welfare than in the south²⁵¹. King postulates that the northern pattern reflected not lack of resources but reluctance to depend upon community resources and an ingrained dependence on kinship²⁵².

London may have been different again. Forbes' chronicle of parish records in Shakespearean Aldgate barely touches on lunacy although "inward grief", "spleen", "frenzy" and "thowghts" were recorded as rare cause of death.²⁵³ Wear categorised into two systems the treatment of the sick poor in in the wealthy City parish of St Bartholomew Exchange during the period 1580 to 1676.²⁵⁴ The first was a system of mutual advantage by coercion, a primitive social 'work-fare' scheme, by which women paupers recruited from the ranks of regular 'pensioners' were paid as 'keepers of the

sick.^a Women were ordered in 1577 to keep any sick person of "what disease soever it be" upon pain of losing alms but they also got extra for doing the job.^{b255} The second system was by recourse to apothecaries, surgeons and physicians at the parish expense and by paying for care in institutions, more readily accessible from the City. Wear describes in detail the parish support of "distracted" Katherine Rumney and her family, using periods at Bethlem, out-relief and visits from a mad-doctor.²⁵⁶

A century later the City parish of St Martin Outwich seems to have been using both Wear's options in combination. The parish spent £6 8s in 1738 and about £4 in 1739, out of a total annual poor budget of £240, on supporting Sarah Allen when she was "ill"²⁵⁷. They sent her for a time to Bethlem, then to St Thomas' Hospital, then to be looked after with Mrs Stocks for 13 weeks^c. Finally she was found a place in Christ's Hospital almshouses^d but the parish continued to support her, giving her sister money to go with her to the country for a month's holiday and supplying clothing and travelling expenses throughout. Much of overseer William Mortishead's time was taken up with this woman, she appears just as "Sarah" in many entries. Her condition is referred to as "sickness" or "ill" throughout, even though she clearly had some form of mental derangement.

The careful deliberation over individuals and their families is hardly the disaster that MacDonald claims for the insane in the Georgian period, a time of "incarceration in madhouses and medical brutality".²⁵⁸ Through the eighteenth century the authorities increasingly used secure placements with professional keepers or sent sufferers to one of the rising numbers of private asylums but this does not signify the "abolition of family care" and "abandonment of therapeutic pluralism" that MacDonald suggests.²⁵⁹ Physicians' opinion were sought, the resort to a professional response had begun. The

^a An alternative to becoming a 'keeper of the sick' was to become a 'searcher' ie death notifier, or 'a searcher of the sick suspected', a notifier of plague and other notifiable diseases.

^b Rule 25 of the 17th century Geffrye Almshouses, Kingland Road, required residents "to attend and assist and be helpful to each other in sickness....on pain of expulsion" Wear 1991 op cit p49.

^c Mrs Stocks also took in for the parish a young woman during her lying-in while Sarah was at her house.

^d Christ's Hospital Almshouses for 6 widows were on St Peter's Hill near St Paul's. They were demolished in the 19th Century.

therapeutic ideal was beginning to intrude on the custodial approach. There was no "epistemological rupture", Porter points out, between the Georgian period and the world of early nineteenth century institutions and optimistic therapeutics, rather an increasing willingness by families and the parish to seek specialist advice and supervision²⁶⁰. The starting point of 1800 chosen for this study begins to look arbitrary. The King's madness, the Select Committees of 1807 and 1815-16 and the adoption of insanity as 'a suitable case' for government regulation all point however to the beginning of the nineteenth century as a convenient starting point. This was when public and government awareness of insanity began to expose the old parish system of care to close and critical scrutiny.

It is impossible to know how big a problem insane people were for parishes at the beginning of the 1800s. Poor law statistics were not collected routinely before 1834 except for broad costs. An annual series of expenditure surveys began in 1812. There were however a number of national surveys carried out by government seeking information about paupers, notably in 1802-3²⁶¹, 1824²⁶² and in 1832²⁶³ when the Royal Commission, making inquiries prior to the Amendment Act, compiled a mammoth schedule of questions for each parish. Regrettably none of these returns identified the insane pauper or distinguished him in any way from the mass of other aged, infirm or sick. The insane are incorporated into the general "impotent" statistics.

In 1802-3, 1.04 million, 9 per cent of the population in England and Wales, were receiving poor relief. Relief was given selectively; there was no universal benefit for any group. Only a proportion of the very aged and a smaller proportion of men with dependent children got parish help. There was no system of permanent relief; rather vestries were doling out discontinuous blocks of cash according to need on application.²⁶⁴ In 1802-3 nearly a third of the total were only "occasionally relieved" and most of the recipients continued to live in their own homes. Only 83,000 (something under 8%) were returned as in workhouses or houses of industry. The vast majority received small irregular cash hand-outs. The mean weekly dole was 1s 3d per week. Without knowing the variation round this mean, it is difficult to know

how many were totally dependent on relief and how many, probably the majority, used it to supplement other sources of income.

There was little change in the national picture of expenditure on relief between 1802 and 1812 but in the following 22 years up to 1833, relief costs were running about 60 per cent higher than in the first decade of the century. The form of relief and the classes of recipient remained broadly the same. Able-bodied men and their dependent women and children made up 84 per cent of those relieved, the aged, sick and infirm 16 per cent. The amount being spent on the impotent poor requiring total care would have been far higher per person than the fit workless person receiving a small supplementary cash dole. If this occurred to the members of the 1832 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws they did not remark on it.

National returns were collected on the amount being spent by parishes on lunatics from 1842. One way of considering the impact of the insane on vestries is to calculate how many paupers were being supported in parish workhouses, in licensed houses or subscription hospitals between 1800 and 1834. The Select Committee Reports of 1807 and 1815/16 were the main source of information, or perhaps better called misinformation, in the early nineteenth century. The 1807 returns declared 1765 lunatics in parish poorhouses and houses of industry and 483 persons in "private custody", that is placed with keepers or in private madhouses. The Committee noted the returns were "so evidently deficient in several instances that a very large addition must be made in any completion of the whole number".²⁶⁵

It was clear to the Select Committee of 1807 that there were differences in the way parishes in metropolitan London were managing insane paupers compared with those outside London. In the Metropolis,

Parishes have adopted the system of boarding out insane paupers in private madhouses and it gives satisfaction to report from the evidence of Dr Willis that their treatment in general appears to be extremely proper, but it is right to observe that this depends wholly upon the good conduct of the keeper of such House.²⁶⁶

Proprietor of Gretford House licensed house in Lincolnshire and retained in London by Thomas Warburton to recommend patients to his Whitmore House in Hoxton (see Appendix B), Willis^e was hardly a disinterested witness. He was also one of the five College of Physician appointed Commissioners who visited the metropolitan licensed houses to inspect private patients. Sir George O Paul sneered at the supine physicians that they "haven't considered themselves as required to examine the situation" of pauper lunatics detained in the same madhouses, although to be fair, Parliament had not required them to do so. The Select Committee of 1807 commented unfavourably on the cost of a private madhouse placement (9-10s per week) compared with St Luke's (7s 6d per week) but the private madhouses escaped major censure, largely because few witnesses knew what went on inside them.

The County of Middlesex listed a total of 175 lunatics receiving relief in the 1807 returns; 110 in private madhouses and the rest in parish poor houses and workhouses. The number is ludicrously low. Thomas Dunstan, the Master of St Luke's Hospital, declared he normally had 300 patients of whom 60 were paid for by parishes. About half of these were from the metropolitan area. The Town Register of Licensed Houses compiled by the College commissioners for the Select Committee²⁶⁷ lists 17 individuals who held licences to keep houses for the admission of lunatics in the metropolitan area, of whom half were either resident in East London or kept their licensed house there. The equivalent Country Register lists 28 licenses issued by provincial magistrates.

The scale of inaccuracy of the 1806 Middlesex returns can be guessed at from the figures presented at the further Select Committee hearings of 1815.²⁶⁸ It was reported that three quarters of 486 patients at Hoxton House licensed house and 445 of 615 patients at Warburton's two Bethnal Green houses were paupers and yet the official statistics give a total of 543 patients admitted to the metropolitan houses in 1815.²⁶⁹ Richard Powell, Secretary to the College Commissioners, produced a list in 1815 of

^e This was Robert Willis, nephew of Francis Willis. As assistant to his uncle he had participated in the treatment of George III and was able to command high fees **Macalpine I, Hunter R** 1969 *George III and the Mad-Business*. London, Allen Lane. 114-129.

the 34 licenses in the metropolitan area.²⁷⁰ Almost half were issued to three East London proprietors, Burrows, Miles and Warburton. Powell had little confidence in his statistics; he knew of at least one madhouse operating in London without a licence and thought it possible there were others. He was supposed to report on the figures for provincial houses too but they also were unsatisfactory. "No returns have ever been received from Wales".

Parry-Jones²⁷¹ compiled a table using the Select Committee reports, parliamentary returns and Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to estimate the numbers of licensed houses in the metropolitan area and in the provinces from 1774-1841. The data were scanty. Only for six of these years was it possible to establish official figures. Parry-Jones concluded that the apparent growth in licensed houses from 45 in 1807 to 123 in 1841 may simply be an artefact of the increasing efficiency of the recording system, particularly after the Metropolitan Commissioners began to compile statistics on a regular basis. It was not until 1844 that the numbers of patients confined in Licensed Houses and Asylums was collected annually. The national data then do not provide a reliable picture of how parishes dealt with mad people, how they decided on where to place people in need of round-the-clock care nor how much they paid for their care. Parish records should provide a more rounded account of how mad people were managed under the old poor law in the early nineteenth century.

Throughout the period 1800-1834 East London parishes remained resolutely independent. There were no unions formed under Gilbert's Act or by incorporation. Most however had their own local acts, usually more than one, for administering poor relief in a fashion to suit themselves. Sheppard finds the Local Act "the cornerstone of local government in the eighteenth century."²⁷² Some parishes like St Matthew Bethnal Green had more than a dozen acts that they had progressed through parliament over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the City of London there were no fewer than 96 parishes within the Corporation 'square mile'. The City was unusual in that the Justices of the Peace comprised the 26 Aldermen who acted as the overseeing and appeal body for the parishes. Aldermen were usually wealthy City merchants and

traders whose main home was outside the City.^f They did not have the keen interest in the effect of poor relief on their own pockets in the way parish vestrymen rate-payers did, nor were they much interested in the flexible availability of a local labour force needed by the rural gentleman farmer and the urban industrialist proprietor. While local City parishes were as constrained as suburban ones in their expenditure and cheap was as virtuous a quality to City parishes as elsewhere, it appears that City aldermen quite frequently allowed appeals and overturned local parish decisions when they felt it justified.²⁷³

By 1800 four ancient parishes remained in the eastern metropolitan area, St Leonard Shoreditch, St John at Hackney, St Mary Whitechapel and All Saints Poplar. Other parishes had been created by dividing the huge parish of St Dunstan's Stepney in the eighteenth century, all with strikingly different patterns of vestry administration.²⁷⁴ The small population in each administration made it difficult to establish economically viable institutions. Hence small workhouses, "dumps and dosshouses" according to Rudé, and lock-ups were scattered all over London after the enabling act of 1722²⁷⁵. Hackney for example built a workhouse in 1777, Shoreditch earlier in 1726. Most relief was provided in the form of cash support or by boarding out the dependent person with a nurse or other form of paid keeper. This was the normal way of looking after young children who would otherwise be in the workhouse. Two or three children would be fostered out to each of several women, who presented themselves and their charges to the churchwardens' overseers every week for inspection and weekly payment. The alternative for the larger parishes was to build or rent a special children's institution such as the one Shoreditch used at Enfield. In the City a handful of larger parishes, St Sepulchre Holborn, for example, built their own workhouses. Smaller parishes sent those requiring supervision to Showell's Poorhouse in Bear Lane, Southwark or to one of the dozen or so pauper farms.

^f The 26 City Aldermen are still ex-officio JPs although they are supplemented on the bench by magistrates appointed in twentieth century fashion no. The majority of Corporation Aldermen still do not reside in the City.

The small City of London parish of **St Andrew Undershaft**²⁷⁶ has preserved in tact the "Workhouse Minute Books", in fact the Minutes of the Parish Overseers,^g for the years 1801 to 1807, recording month by month careful deliberations over a handful of families and individuals.^h The Committee met regularly for the first half of the meeting in the parish vestry room then for the second half they travelled to Hoxton, a ten minute carriage drive away, to Jonathan Tipple's pauper 'farm' house at 12 Queen Street, where the poor of several City parishes were placed. The first half of the meeting considered applications for relief. A detailed history was taken of how the person fell into poverty. Then the Beadle would be asked to make further inquiries. Sometimes this was done to check the validity of the settlement but on many occasions it seems to have been out of a desire to understand more fully the extent of the family's distress and circumstances.

John Doyle first applied for help for himself and his infant children on 2nd February 1802, specifically requesting "ground" costs for the funeral of his wife.²⁷⁷ He was given more than he asked for, a full guinea to cover the total costs of the funeral including the clothing appropriate to that occasion. A few weeks later he came back seeking more money for clothing. The Committee agreed and asked one of the women who looked after parish children, Sarah Pightling, who was at the meeting, to help choose some shirts for Doyle. Evidently he was not thought up to this task himself. He was refused further relief on 26 April. John Doyle's struggle to support himself and his children outside the workhouse ended a year later on 27 June 1803 when he and his oldest son were taken into Mr Tipple's and his three children were boarded out with Mrs Pightling, where they remained for at least four years. The cost of schooling them, £1, 2s 3d per week appears regularly in the lists of relief up to 1807. They remained with Mrs Pightling throughout this period.

^g The Vestry elected the Trustees of the Poor Committee who appointed a smaller sub-committee of two-three members who acted as Overseers for the year to administer poor relief. After the Permissive Vestry Act of 1819 they could appoint a salaried permanent official to assist them, the Assistant Overseer.

^h The Church of St Andrew is preserved, in St Mary Axe EC4

Conditions at Tipple's were pretty grim, as noted in chapter 3, p68. The parish moved their poor from Tipple's after a Christmas visit by the beadle in 1807.ⁱ Parishes without a workhouse like St Andrew Undershaft had the advantage of being able to make pragmatic *ad hoc* decisions for individual paupers which was denied to vestries which had built their own workhouse. The parish was still using Tipple's and Willis' in 1816-17.²⁷⁸ Tipple's bill for the Ladyday Quarter 1817 was £131 11s 0d and for Willis £23 8s 6d.

Where did the insane, as one species of pauper, fit into the relief system operating in East London in these early years? Smith²⁷⁹ points out that the 'purchaser/provider split' in the mixed public, charitable and private care that characterised provision for pauper lunatics under the old poor law was a market economy in which the new county asylums built after 1808 had to compete for business. Since there was no County Asylum for Middlesex until 1828, purchasing from the mixed economy was not optional but necessary for most parishes in East London unless the parish was big enough or rich enough to build a comprehensive institution of its own.

There were plenty of 'dedicated' institutions for lunatics in East London, described above in chapter 3. The Hoxton madhouses were within easy walking distance of the City for the purpose of visiting their charges. There was also St Luke's Hospital for the Insane similarly close. There was a small madhouse at Guy's Hospital, established in 1726, which took patients of both sexes in its first century. Finally there was Bethlem Hospital in Moorfields, rebuilt on St George's Fields, Southwark in 1815. Expensive and with a long waiting list Bethlem rarely figures after 1800 in the parish records that I have inspected.²⁸⁰

Documentary Sources. Very few parishes have comprehensive records of the period 1800-1834. The map^(Fig. 2.1) shows the parishes in East London that covered the area. Three parishes covered the modern Borough of Hackney, St John at Hackney, St Leonard Shoreditch and St Mary Stoke Newington, the latter having only later

ⁱ Other parishes continued to use Tipple's and Robertson's until 1823, long after the 1815 Select Committee inquiry

records. Modern Tower Hamlets was divided between the parishes of St Matthew Bethnal Green, Christ Church Spitalfields, St George in the East, St Anne Limehouse, St Paul's Shadwell, St Mary Whitechapel, Bromley by Bow, Stratford le Bow, All Saints Poplar, St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney, Wapping, Ratcliff and the hamlets and liberties of Mile End New Town, Norton Folgate, St Katherine by the Tower and Old Artillery. Parts of modern Islington were close by and have been included for comparative purposes where there is documentation, that is the parishes of St James Clerkenwell and St Luke Old Street. Appendix A lists the available parish sources.

In the City of London there were 96 parishes, of which 14 have some Trustees' records but only three, St Anne Blackfriars, St Botolph Aldgate and St Sepulchre Holborn, all large parishes on the City borders, have minute books for the Trustees of the Poor and also records of outdoor and indoor relief. A number of parishes have settlement examination records. These often contain very full descriptions of the circumstances of poverty but because they cover only those paupers of dubious settlement, they are biased towards transients, migrants and the unusual. Nevertheless the detail resurrects the lives of the supplicant paupers like few other records. The records of St Martin Vintry from 1815-23 are particularly well preserved and legible.²⁸¹ Those from St Martin Ludgate are also extensive but less legible.²⁸²

St Martin Vintry. The parish had no poorhouse of its own but sent its paupers to Showell's in Bear Lane and to Deacon's at Mile End. There are three detailed settlement examinations recorded between 1815 and 1823 that record the management of mentally abnormal people. The examination of Reuben Hartley, 28yrs old, took place on 6th May 1815.²⁸³ He had resided with his wife at apartments in Little Elbow Lane for the past 3½ years. The Overseer John Fisher recorded

Committed a violent outrage a few nights since in breaking open Mr Coleman's door Little Elbow Lane about 12 o'clock. The Lord Mayor considers him insane and directs the Churchwardens verbally to provide for him in a Mad House. Having a certificate to that effect Sir Jonathan Miles Lunatic Asylum has agreed to receive him at 10/6 per week. He was taken there from Giltspur Street Compter in a Hackney coach and put under Mr Miles' care with a note from the churchwardens requesting

him to provide for him an a/c of the Parish of St Martin Vintry (John Fisher overseer agreed with Mr Watts the keeper).

Mr John Haslam the Physician to Bethlehem Hospital was ordered by JF to visit and report when he would be in a state to be safely discharged and upon his certificate dated 1st June to that effect the churchwardens sent JF with an order for his discharge. (Paid £2 7s 0d for Board and care). He was discharged accordingly and restored to his wife and went to work next day at his usual occupation at Messrs Wrights the Packers in Little Elbow Lane.

A post-script says "left Wrights in 1816, went to Manchester and took large premises. Left wife in London." But this was not the last of Reuben Hartley. In June 1817 he reappeared:

Was taken by City officers (insane) and confined in the Giltspur Street Compter, the Lord Mayor finding he had a lodging at the Sugar Loaf^j Little Elbow Lane and that was the last place he slept in send for JF to attend him when he gave us a letter for Bethlehem where we took him Thursday 5 June. The Bond to cost us £5 4s 0d; we wrote to Manchester but could get nothing there without passing him, so considering that we had better put up with the least expense and trouble he was discharg'd from Bethlem 24 September following when we paid about 6/0 for shoes.

The Lord Mayor was an active Justice of the Peace; he was clearly there in person to make decisions about the deranged Hartley. It is interesting too that Haslam, the Bethlem apothecary, was engaged to give an opinion. Later it would be rare indeed for a parish or union to engage an expert in this fashion. The second St Martin Vintry case is that of a simple boy.²⁸⁴ John Carr, Dinah his wife, son John aged 15, Dinah aged 11, Elizabeth 9 and Sarah 6 were passed from Queenhithe parish and examined on 17th August 1820.

Lodger in Londons Tenements at 40 Queen St @ 4/- per week about 1 year a Blacksmith earns 30/- per week sometimes more. The boy John having been in Vintry Ward School but an Idiot, wants the parish to put him in the workhouse. Gave him an order for Bear Lane 21 August 1820. Relieve them occasionally.

A later entry in March 1823 reads

John Carr bound apprentice to ...Neilson...to go to sea. Paid £5 to fitt him out-returned again after going one voyage to Demarara, not having been in any Harbour in

^j From the numerous settlement examinations in which the Sugar Loaf is given as a temporary address it must have been a large public lodgings house.

England 6 weeks gained no settlement by his apprenticeship. Sent again to Showells where he is likely to remain for life.

The complex settlement rules did not help the parish to shuffle off the cost of Carr's care to another parish in this case. The third case was of a "small and deformed person Sarah Jillson" who was supported with outdoor relief of 2s per week from 1815 to 1820 but was then sent to the pauper farm Deacon's "being insane" and died a year later.²⁸⁵ This is an instance of the not uncommon practice of sending an insane pauper to a pauper farm rather than to an asylum.

St Martin Ludgate. The examinations for settlement are numerous but difficult to read because of the faint, close-set script. The parish had its own poorhouse and used Fry's (Willis's) manufactory in Mint Street, Borough for the able-bodied and unpopular²⁸⁶. The parish used Warburton's if necessary but did not send Dennis Mahony, preferring the workhouse.

A Casual Insane. Admitted into the House having been taken up for Riotous Conduct in Breaking the Windows of Mr Box corner of Ave Maria Lane in this parish. He says he was born at sea and that he has not any legal settlement.²⁸⁷

St Anne Blackfriars. The poorhouse registers for the period 1818 to 1837 were kept by an assistant overseer who had a diffident approach to diagnosing insanity and degrees of mental incapacity.²⁸⁸ Of 119 men and 156 women admitted between 1818 and 1834 there are only six people described as "insane" and 2 referred to as "lunatic" but others are described more cautiously, "supposed to be insane", "not quite right in her mind" "a strange but healthy woman. Drunkard". Blackfriars is about as far away from the East London madhouses, a good hour's walk, as any parish in the City but during these years St Anne's favoured "Mr Warburton's mad house at Bethnal Green". Five paupers went to Bethnal Green from 1818 to 1824 but after that date there is no mention of anyone being sent out of the House. One of the five, 56 yr old Henry Lane, who lodged at 4 Shoemakers Row, was removed from Miles' at Hoxton on 10 April 1818 and sent to Warburton's on 6 January 1821. Throughout the period, the majority of those identified as insane were sent to Showell's Poorhouse in Bear Lane along with other paupers in need of indoor relief or were discharged home to the

care of relatives. There is no indication of how the Showell's managed mad people in the poorhouse.

St Sepulchre Holborn. The parish of Holy Sepulchre, Holborn was one of the largest and wealthiest in the City. The parish straddled the boundary of the City; one part was inside the City Corporation area, the other outside in Middlesex, covering the area around Smithfield and the cattle-droving routes across the Fleet River south of Clerkenwell. The City Division records are extensive but the assistant overseer's appalling handwriting and bad spelling, eccentric even for the period, mars the early years. The workhouse discharge books from 1799 to 1810 contain only one reference to an insane person. There were 343 people in total on the parish poor list in 1801.²⁸⁹

Hannah Wood 30. Admitted 15 Feb 1801 by Mr Satchwell (16 Feb'y 1801. In family 93). Discharg'd 21 Feb 1801 sent to Bethlehem Hospital (Husband had previously taken her out on Jan'y 5 1801 after admission on Dec.22nd 1800 (In family 83, Dec.29 1800).

St Sepulchre had its own parish workhouse, assiduously inspected between 1754 and 1829 by two of the overseers on a rota. The team between 1817 and 1822 included the felicitously named Messrs Comfort, Merry and Wise.²⁹⁰

It is not clear what the parish were doing with their mad at this time. Assistant Overseer Samuel Miller, a man with a good copperplate hand, who ostentatiously wove his name with a flourish in to the title of his ledger, followed the illegible bad speller in the 1820's. Miller kept a personal diary of his own opinion of all outdoor relief recipients which makes entertaining reading; both amusing and perceptive, if a touch judgmental for late twentieth century taste.²⁹¹ He did not seem to let his opinion colour his judgment on the quantity of dole handed out. One shilling and sixpence was his basic weekly sum for an able-bodied man but this went up to six to seven shillings per week for a large family. Ten women and four men were removed from the workhouse to Hoxton House Asylum between 1823 and 1830.²⁹² Jane Lippingwell had just been discharged from St Luke's and Sarah Powell eventually went on from Miles' to Bethlem. Hannah Gittings and Rebecca Jones both died the day after their admission to Miles', Jones having been repatriated to the parish workhouse from "Perry's FH" three days after earlier.²⁹³

Miller's weekly statement of the number and class of poor reached a peak in 1833-34, when on average 565 paupers were relieved daily.²⁹⁴ The first quarter of 1833 listed

203 in the House
24 children at nurse
5 insane poor
10 farmed out
291 casuals and regular pensioners [average]
21 relieved by Asst Overseer
3 relieved by Beadles

There were huge numbers of people on parish relief "by order of the militia" by the early '30s. Men and women and their dependents left needy following discharge from the military at the end of the French wars were a heavy parish burden, supplemented by a large contingent of Irish paupers flooding into London to escape famine and impoverishment back home.²⁹⁵ Earlier in the century, the parish had absorbed the Irish, perhaps John Doyle in St Andrew Undershaft was one of them, but ^{by} 1832 were rigorously repatriating them. Miller must have spent a considerable part of every week fixing up the transport to Liverpool for the most recent gaggle of Irish, where they were put on a boat but often returned by the next boat back to begin the cycle again. One overseer told Chadwick that he thought many Irish presenting themselves as paupers at the end of the summer were merely seeking free passage home with their seasonal earnings stashed away to support the family back home.²⁹⁶

Miller's paupers were personalities; not a faceless labouring mass of indigents. He probably enjoyed his job.^k He wrote of "William Neep, 62, 34 Fleet Lane. Shoemaker 1/6 week. Afflicted as he states with a low dejected mind" Neep was supported for some years, never able to work because of his afflicted spirits;²⁹⁷ "Martha Metcalf, 74. 4 Bulls Head Ct. Husband in the House. Somewhat insane but crafty. 2s a week"; "Mary Allan. A stout athletic woman, very impudent, fond of good living. The amount (7s) was allowed from 5s to 7s for a short time. Has a stand in the Old Bailey for gentlemen and women in the summer"; "Peter Body. An old debauchee troubled with gout. 1s 6d". Many more were "addicted to drink", "fond of tippling", "turbulent

^k For post script on Sam Miller, Edwin Chadwick and the West London Union see Appendix C.

characters". The paupers of St Sepulchre come across as a brazen faced, up-front crowd, competently extracting what they can from a public official sympathetic on the whole to their position. There is no doubt that Miller was supporting with out-relief people unable to work because of mental disability. He probably would not have counted them in any official lunatic return.

St Sepulchre used Miles' Hoxton House for placing lunatics who could not be managed in the workhouse. Ladyday Accounts for 1830 record a total relief bill for the quarter of £5546 17s, of which £231 12s (4%) was spent at Willis and Fry, £368 on "nurses at country" (7%), and £76 14s 9d (1.4%) on "Lunatics at Hoxton House".²⁹⁸ The remainder was divided between the house and outdoor relief.

Miller records providing assistance to "Anne Mussell. 1 Coxes Court, Petticoat Lane needlewoman. Troublesome customer but now reformed. The man who was supposed to be her husband is insane and is now at Miles' in Hoxton-she is married again to [illegible] 2s weekly relief", on another occasion Anne is described as "an old parish stager"²⁹⁹ and also to "Three children, James (11), Ann (9) Elizabeth (6) Miller. These children were reported by the father as legitimate. Father had once a good character but fell insane and is now in Miles' at the parish expense.

St Sepulchre also used St Luke's Hospital for recent onset cases. There is an invoice dated 16 June 1812 for £9 2s 0d (plus 2d postage) for Elizabeth D and Jane Hepworth's care at St Luke's. Second, there is a note of direction from Whitehall signed by Secretary Robert Peel about the certification of Thomas Prior, dated 28 February 1824. Two magistrates had certified Prior who was confined in a lunatic asylum at Hoxton. The parish were directed to pay the weekly sum of 9s 6d for his maintenance. In pencil on the top of the printed notice are the words "Prior...live at Wright's, was born illegit." This letter has the air of a final adjudication on a disputed cost allocation, possibly about a criminally insane patient. Wright's (by then better known as the White House or Talbot's) was probably not St Sepulchre's choice. Prior had been sent there by the magistrates, whereas Miles' House and St Luke's were specifically chosen by the parish.

St Botolph Aldgate. The third parish for which outdoor and indoor relief material is extant is the huge parish on the eastern fringe of the city. St Botolph favoured "the House of John Warburton at Bethnal Green", cost 9s per week in the early 1830s.³⁰⁰ Ann Duncan went to Warburton's on the recommendation of the surgeon Thomas Porter by order of two City JPs, Sir Peter Laurie¹ and Michael Gibbs.³⁰¹ There is one mention of a child with mental illness. On 5 July 1827, "Edwin Pope aged 13yrs, was passed by St George Midd'sex by his father's settlement. Insane. Sent him to Warburton and Talbot's Mad House Bethnall Green same day".³⁰²

The parish continued to use Warburton's in the late 1830s and early 40's, well after the completion of Hanwell County Asylum. There is only one mention of a pauper going to Hanwell, Mary Pier in 1838, in the old poor law records.³⁰³ For most categories of pauper however St Botolph preferred to use the facilities of their own workhouse, built in the late 1820s. They told the Poor Law Commissioners that they could accommodate 200 people comfortably in the workhouse, the maximum they had taken in was 265.³⁰⁴

Earlier in the century they had farmed out most of their paupers. In 1800 they had 112 indoor paupers of whom 73 were at Overton's pauper farm in Bethnal Green. The others were at Mr Deacon's in Bethnal Green, at "Mr Sutton's City Farm House" in Islington (34 paupers placed there in total between 1811 and 1814) and 70 or so between 1813 and 1820 went to Thomas Willis' worsted manufactory in Southwark.³⁰⁵ Physically ill paupers were sent to Guy's Hospital. The insane remain indistinguishable from other paupers. If they were using the private licensed houses in the early years that they later favoured there is nothing recorded in the minutes of the Trustees to confirm that.

St John at Hackney. A select vestry governed the parish of St John at Hackney. Before 1613 all male parishioners had been entitled to take part in the management of parish affairs at open vestry meetings. In that year the Bishop of London, at the

¹ Sir Peter Laurie was Chairman of Governors, Bethlem

instigation of the wealthier residents concerned at the influx of City tradesmen into the parish, created a select vestry consisting of no more than 32 parishioners to govern the parish with the clergy and churchwardens. The select vestry acted as the executive body but co-existed for more than 200 years with open parish meetings twice a year.³⁰⁶ The select vestry appointed the clerk, churchwardens and other officer to manage the workhouse, local constabulary and street lighting.

A local act of 1810 allowed all householders with property values of £40 per year to act as co-vestrymen for the relief of the poor only.^m In 1833 there was a challenge to the status of the select vestry to which the members offered no serious resistance. Control of poor relief reverted to the ratepayers until the reorganisation of London government in 1855.³⁰⁷

The cost of maintaining the poor in Hackney was £5,158 in 1803, over £13,000 in 1813 and 1821 and slightly less in 1831. The rise in poor relief, which was more uneven than the increase in population, produced an expenditure per head of 15s 8d in 1813 but less than half that in 1831.³⁰⁸ The smaller neighbouring population of St Mary Stoke Newington was an open vestry but made extensive use of specially appointed committees to deal with special problems.³⁰⁹

Only a few records survive from this period, including the admission/discharge registers for the years 1797-1807 to the Hackney Workhouse at Homerton.³¹⁰ There are twelve entries referring to paupers with mental disorder. Two arrived by 'orders of removal' under the Acts of Settlement from neighbouring London parishes, six were brought in directly by one of the beadles and four were admitted "by the Committee", which suggests a planned admission following a period of deliberation. Several had been in the House before, some a number of times. Two quickly "eloped", that is escaped / left without permission, six were sent at some time in the next few weeks or months to St Luke's Hospital, Guy's Mad House, Bethnal Green Mad House or Mr Barth's (?), all these being short term placements. One woman went back to her employer, two were sent home to relatives and one was sent to his home parish of

Greenford. Since there are no outdoor relief records in Hackney, it is not possible to say whether these admissions were characteristic of Hackney's management of mad people.

The following entries appear in the Workhouse Registers, (* also appear in St Luke's Hospital registers).

1803: William Robinson, admitted May 29, brought in by Griffith [beadle] A mad man. Eloped over garden wall June 4th 1803

1803: Sarah Longhorn admitted October 5 (in the house before on Feb 20 1797) brought in by Griffith. Been almost drowned in Dalston Brook: Nov. 1st 1806 Readmitted by the Committee. been previously admitted by James Griffith 29 Mar. 1802. A lunatic; eloped 20 Dec. 1806, (ret next day). Gone 11 April 1807.

*1803: Ann Robinson. Admitted March 21 1803 by removal from Westminster Insane, sent to St Luke's. 22nd April 1803

1804: A Swedish woman. Brought in by Griffith the Beadle. March 3 discharged March 12 1804 Insane, delivered of a dead child next day.

1804: Ann Hanney 36 yrs Admitted by the Committee. A servant to Mr Pulsford. A lunatic, gone to Mr Barth's ⁿ [?] by order of Mr Adamson. 16 Jan 1805

*1805: Robert Woodland admitted by Committee Aug. 2nd readmitted July 2 and Aug 2 1806 Sent to Guy's Mad House Sept 1st 1804 Returned from St Luke's Hospital 18....[illegible] Eloped June 3 Aug 6 1806

*1805: Mary Murrell 19years. Admitted Dec 3 by Mr Adamson derang'd in mind. Sent to Bethnall Green Mad House Dec 7 1805 Returned Feb 26 1806. Nov 6 1806 Gone to her Father's

*1805: Amelia Wright. Admitted Dec 26 by Mr Adamson in servitude with Mr Lemesurier, Mare St. discharged by the Committee Sept 4 1805 A lunatic. Sent to St Luke's Hospital 26 Feb 1806 Readmitted from St Luke's Hospital March 1st 1806. Gone to Mr Lemesurier.

1807: Ann Wright 16yrs Admitted Feb 5 by Mr Adamson, Servant to Mr mills, Church St. discharg'd Feb 11 1807 derang'd in Mind. Gone with Mother to Newport

1807: John Seton. Admitted Dec 15 by the Committee. Servant to Mr Gilbert in Grove St Derang'd Jan 3 1807. Sent to parish of Greenford.

^m Thomas Warburton the madhouse proprietor was one of the co-vestrymen.

ⁿ Could this be Mr Batties ie St Luke's or another madhouse?

1807: Laddy admitted Dec 23rd by Mr Mildwick, derang'd in mind.

About 20% of admissions to Hackney Workhouse made their 'escape' by climbing over the garden wall. Physically sick paupers were sent to Guy's Hospital, often for repeated admissions of short duration. Several people who were sent to Guy's "eloped" while they were there. There is no record of the parishes sending anyone to St Bartholomew's Hospital during this period which would have been nearer, if only by twenty minutes or so.

St Leonard Shoreditch. The parish of Shoreditch included Shoreditch proper, Kingsland, Hoxton, Haggerston and the part of Ermine Street (now Kingsland Rd) below Dalston Cross. When James Parkinson set up in practice at No 1 Hoxton Square in the early 1800s, he settled in an elegant Georgian square in a peaceful neighbourhood.^o The area deteriorated rapidly over the next thirty years into a crime-infested, overcrowded twilight area of some notoriety and it has never recovered. The records of St Leonard's Vestry go back to the early 18th century. Notices of outdoor relief, orders of removal, workhouse admissions and discharge books and minutes of the Trustees of the Poor are preserved from the late 1770s.

There was a small parish poorhouse in Hoxton Street in the mid-eighteenth century but many paupers were 'farmed', that is boarded out, in one of three private poorhouses locally.³¹¹ The Trustees sought a local act "for the betterment of the conditions of the poor of the parish" in order to build a new workhouse in the early 1770s, sorely needed for the 39 children using 3 beds amongst others.³¹² They purchased a plot of land stretching between Hoxton Street and Kingsland Road called the Land of Promise and at a cost of £3,336 built a new workhouse, completed in 1777 with a pauper burial ground laid out on the northern side.^p The new workhouse had special infirmary wards for the sick and rooms for the insane and idiots.

^o For a note on **James Parkinson**, see Biographical Notes, Appendix C

^p A body was snatched from the burial ground shortly after it was first used. **Richardson R** 1988 *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*. Harmondsworth Penguin 57-60. The burial ground is now the hospital car park.

The Trustees employed an apothecary to attend to sick paupers, indoor and outdoor. The apothecary in the 1770s was a woman Mrs Evans, who was paid at the rate of ten guineas per quarter with "an additional allowance if a man-midwife should be called to her assistance".³¹³ In 1776 Mr B Beynon became apothecary at a salary of 20 guineas per quarter inclusive of the supply of medicines, the usual practice at that time. He was obliged to practice midwifery but a special allowance of half a guinea was paid for a "proto natural labour". William Sharpe succeeded Beynon in 1784. Sharpe's son, James Birch Sharpe, worked with him and later took over his father's practice as surgeon apothecary to Hoxton House, where he had been working for 5 years when he was called to give evidence to the Select Committee of 1815 (see Hoxton House, chapter 3). In 1813, William Sharpe was followed as parish doctor by Messrs Parkinson and Son, "surgeons, apothecaries and man-midwives to the parish" at a salary of 250 gns per annum.³¹⁴

James Parkinson continued as parish doctor until he died in December 1824, then his son John William Keys Parkinson continued for a further seven years until he resigned in 1831 to concentrate on his more profitable private midwifery practice. After his father's death he was assisted by Luke Holmes, a surgeon living in Kingsland Road, who continued to serve the parish until 1838. Holmes was the sole doctor certifying insane patients between 1831 and 1839, when William Finer's name appears in the Returns to the Commissioners in Lunacy.³¹⁵

From 1806 to 1823 the parish contracted for the care of 20 pauper lunatics with Mrs Esther Burrows at Holly House.³¹⁶ The parish doctor was also doctor to Burrows. Presumably this came about because before becoming parish doctor Parkinson was already employed by Burrows. From 1823 to 1827, possibly because the Holly House beds were full, 12 insane paupers were placed at Miles' Hoxton House, always referred to as "the late Sir Jonathan Miles". Then from 1827 to 1832 lunatics were once more sent to Burrows, by now registered to Mr George Burrows, Esther's son.³¹⁷

Most of the admissions were short-lived, a few weeks or even only a few days, presumably for a period of containment before being readmitted to the workhouse.

The workhouse had fixed costs of course that would not be reduced by a handful of vacancies so there would have been a direct financial incentive to the Trustees in returning paupers to the workhouse as quickly as possible. The sudden cessation of placements at Hoxton House in 1827 may have been a result of the Select Committee's criticisms in 1827. The Trustees must have been aware of conditions there before that since it is literally five minutes walk from the back of the workhouse and the Trustees visited their out-placed paupers regularly.

The workhouse discharge books from the late 1820s also record patients being sent to St Luke's Hospital and occasionally to Bethlem.³¹⁸ St Leonard's was one of the heaviest users of St Luke's from 1800 to 1830³¹⁹ (see St Luke's Hospital, chapter 3). They sent no less than 217 admissions over that thirty-year period, between 6 and 8 patients every year. St Leonard's use of the hospital dropped by half over the 5 years between 1826 and 1830, in part presumably because of the opening of Hanwell or the anticipation of it. Placements at St Luke's declined before that and it may be that the heavy demands on the poor rate in the late 1820s deterred the Trustees from supplementing parishioners' private incomes with the extra necessary to place a patient there. Only the parish of St Luke's Old Street, where the hospital was right next door to the church, comes anywhere near to this level of use.

Ten to twenty per cent of workhouse discharges and deaths were absconsions, as in Hackney. Physically ill paupers were sent to St Thomas', Guy's or Barts but there is no indication of why one rather than another. Availability of beds was probably the main determinant. Able-bodied men were sent to Willis' worsted factory in the Borough or to Willis' flax mills at Hounslow. The less able were farmed out to one of the Bethnal Green pauper farms, Overton's or Deacon's. The children went to a separate establishment that the parish owned or leased at Enfield. Shortly after he was appointed parish doctor in 1813, Parkinson complained that he had insufficient time to attend to the sick children at Enfield in addition to his duties at the workhouse and infirmary so a local Enfield doctor was recruited.

Paupers transferred from St Leonard's workhouse to Holly House and St Luke's were usually admitted from one or two weeks, rarely staying longer than three months. In other words, short 'acute' episodes of care were being purchased for indoor paupers who would be returned to the workhouse as soon as possible. There were others however, admitted directly from home to the licensed house or hospital, who may have stayed longer.⁹

On February 9th 1832, the Trustees decided that in future, lunatics were to be sent "to the new Lunacy Act County Asylum at Hanwell under the charge of Doctor Ellis".³²⁰ In 1831 the parish had 'tried out' 3 admissions to Hanwell, one female and two males, presumably satisfactorily and after the policy decision in 1832, 10 men and 15 women were admitted to Hanwell from the St Leonard's parish. Nine women arrived at Hanwell *en bloc*, transferred from another institution, probably from Holly House.³²¹

What were conditions like for the insane who remained in the workhouse? There is a rather dubious piece of evidence to the Select Committee of 1815 from James Birch Sharpe, the young surgeon at Miles'. He had been grilled in a rather hostile manner about his work at Miles' and was later criticised for his lack of diligence in the care of the naval lunatics placed at Miles'. His second appearance was at his own request and sounds very much as if he was 'point scoring' off the local workhouse and Parkinson to put Miles in a better light. Birch had applied for the post of parish doctor when his father died in 1813 although he had said he could not take on the midwifery practice.³²² The Trustees decided that they would prefer one 'firm' to do the whole job. James Parkinson was present for that decision. He and his son applied for and got the post at the packed next meeting by unanimous election.³²³ Sharpe may well have had cause to resent Parkinson. This is what he said³²⁴:

The parish workhouse of St Leonard Shoreditch; there are thirty three Lunatics in that house so denominated in their ward book of whom fourteen are males and nineteen females; the greater part are only troubled with fits and properly speaking not insane. There are no dangerous lunatics in the house at this moment; but it is the custom of that house to place refractory people among the Lunatics as a punishment. There are

⁹ Parkinson was criticised in the national press for his part in admitting a private patient to Holly House. A full account is given in Morris (1958) based on reports in *The Times* and *The Statesman*.

also 17 lunatics at this time belonging to the parish at Warburton's madhouse at Hoxton, and I should submit the propriety of a bill being passed of all Lunatics being put out.

Under what restraint are those persons confined in your house? If they are very bad they are hand-cuffed; and sometimes they have a strait-waistcoat and are leg-locked.

When did you visit them last? I have not visited them for a considerable time and I do not know the state they are in at the moment.

Sharpe went on to say that the lunatics received no treatment, "neither moral nor medical....it is totally impossible in that house" but later conceded that they had treatment for physical ailments. The lunatics received no special diet, they were fed "meat so many days a week and porridge so many other days and an allowance such as other persons receive in that house"

Sharpe's main point was that

The sum of money which it would take to support these people, supposing they are 50 lunatics on average, would be little more than £1000 per year at the present price charg'd at Burroughs, which is half-a -guinea or 11s per week. I have in my pocket an abstract of the parish expenditure for the maintenance of Lunatics out of the house for two years from Ladyday 1813 to Ladyday 1815 amounting to £671. 13s 6d....If the whole of the Lunatics were placed out, taking the number to fifty, it would come to about £1300 a year.

Sharpe pointed out that inside the workhouse, paupers cost 4s 2d, sometimes as much as 5s a week and the expense of placing all the lunatics out was not so great. He said that he had proposed to the parish that they construct a separate building for lunatics, "but the expense they objected to.....no less than £42,000 was collected in two years for the maintenance of the poor in our parish and the distress is so great it is almost impossible to raise money".

When he gave evidence it must have been two years since Sharpe visited the workhouse regularly but he had also become a Trustee of the Poor, acting as an internal auditor with another Trustee, Reece, so he had accurate knowledge of the accounts.³²⁵ There is no evidence that the Trustees ever placed patients at Warburton's (Whitmore House) in Hoxton. Warburton did not take pauper patients into his

Hoxton house, reserving it for his private trade. Parkinson must have been irritated at the least by Sharpe's account. He had just spent two years engaged in a major reorganisation of the infirmary wards and coped with a major typhus epidemic.

Still, Sharpe's disparaging account of the care of lunatics in the workhouse may not have been too far removed from the reality. Edward Wakefield reported to the Select Committee his visit to St Luke's workhouse^r in the parish next door:

I saw in the parish workhouse of St Luke's 26 patients, the females were huddled together in a small gloomy dirty room near to which were two small bedrooms in which there were tow or three idiots in bed. The men were generally strolling about in the yard of the workhouse. I understood from the governor of the workhouse that the parish maintained them cheaper in the workhouse than by sending them to any establishment for the reception of insane persons; and none were sent to such establishment but the violent and dirty.³²⁶

Sharpe's point about the relatively modest cost of placing lunatics in special facilities was a valid one. From 1810 to 1820, with an annual average poor budget of £20,000, total workhouse costs were approximately £6,000; the total cost of lunatics amounted to just over £1,000 per annum, a mere 5% of the poor budget. (Calculated at 33 x 4s 2d a week at the workhouse, 22 at Burrows x 11s a week and 5 admissions to St Luke's Hospital at £6 each). The small proportion of the poor budget (5%) spent on out-placing the insane in this beleaguered parish, while substantially greater than in St Sepulchre (1.4%), contrasts dramatically with the percentage of poor relief spent nationally on lunatic placements by Boards of Guardians later in the century, amounting to 9% of the total national poor budget in 1867 and a staggering 35% in 1900.³²⁷

Shoreditch parish was a hugely different place in 1830 from 1800. The escalation in the population from 35,000 to 67,000 had transformed a suburban pleasant area into a seething overpopulated warren of hovels, tenements and airless filthy lanes housing

^r St Luke's Workhouse Sheperdess Walk, became St Luke's and Holborn Union Workhouse, became St Matthew's Hospital for the elderly and chronic sick when taken over by the NHS. A crumbling and dilapidated old dump when I worked there in the 1970s, it was demolished in the late '70s and the patients transferred to another old workhouse in Bethnal Green.

the barely employed and sickly. The relief system was breaking down. Coste and his assistant were unsympathetic to the demanding masses, who had begun to see relief as a normal supplement to their income. The workhouse was crowded and uncomfortable. After Parkinson's re-organisation of the infirmary wards there were no major improvements to the old workhouse until 1863.

Lunatics were a fringe concern to the Shoreditch Trustees. At the beginning of the century, the proximity of the workhouse to Mrs Burrows' and St Luke's Hospital and James Parkinson's joint appointment to the Licensed House and the parish ensured that pauper lunatics probably got better treatment in Shoreditch than in other eastern parishes. Holly House at that time was certainly the best of a bad bunch of pauper lunatic houses. The Trustees were not always happy about the extra cost of Holly House. In 1815 the Trustees expressed their concern about the 11s per week cost for each of their 22 patients there compared with the 7s, 8s and 9s currently being charged by other local licensed houses.³²⁸ In June, four of them accompanied Parkinson to see for themselves whether the cost was justified. They were evidently convinced by that visit that it was since they made no change in their placement policy until Hanwell was well established. By the end of the period, Hanwell had become the preferred placement but the licensed houses and St Luke's were still used for the short-term majority of placements.

All Saints, Poplar. While most of the Poplar parish records for the period 1800 to 1834 have been lost, there are a set of overseers' bills and accounts from 1817 to 1835.³²⁹ From 1816 the quarterly accounts record a payment to Warburton's at Bethnal Green (called Talbot's or the White House) "for the maintenance of paupers", for example in Midsummer 1816, "For maintenance of three paupers at the White House Ann Bolton, Eliz. Bull, H. Baines". The same quarter 12 paupers had been sent to Guy's Hospital for treatment of physical illness. In 1818 the number at the White House fell to 2, rose to 6 in 1819, to 7 in 1820, to 9 in 1829 and to between 9 and 12 in 1830 and 31. By Michaelmas 1832, three of these had been moved to Hanwell Asylum, the rest remained at Talbot's. Five other pauper lunatics, probably from the workhouse had also been moved to Hanwell.³³⁰ If the accounts accurately

reflect all the special lunatic placements Poplar purchased, then in 1831 when the census population of the parish was 16,900, 17 people, that is nearly 1 in 1000 were institutionalised.

The cost of using Talbot's in 1829, when the parish maximum of 12 paupers were there, was £71 11s 8d for the Ladyday quarter. The parish kept three paupers at Talbot's in 1833 and 1834 and six in 1835, at the same time increasing their admissions to Hanwell up to 10 in 1835. Ann Bolton, who was placed at Talbot's in 1816, remained there for the next 16 years until moved to Hanwell in 1832. The Hanwell admission records and financial reports tally with the Poplar overseer's accounts, suggesting that both were accurately kept.³³¹ The parish does not seem to have made any changes to their placement policy following the revelations about conditions at Talbot's in the Select Committee Report of 1827. By 1835, Hanwell was cheaper than Talbot's. It is not clear why the parish would wish to continue using Talbot's. Could it be that this farthest east of the metropolitan parishes was just too far from Hanwell for the county lunatic asylum to be popular with the overseers?

There are three receipted doctors' bills attached to the Christmas accounts for 1828

- Elizabeth Lawson, the sum of a guinea, who was in a state of insanity
- 1 guinea for attending at Lambeth Street and on the care of David Looney^s of unsound mind, October 18th
- To the Trustees of Poplar parish, December 5th 1828. Received of Mr Home the sum of £1 1s for attendance at Bethnal Green to examination of David Looney-a Patient at the White House. Signed A. Blanchard, Surgeon, 21 High St, Poplar

There is a further note of payment "to Marmaduke Tatham Surgeon, for visiting lunatics" in 1831.

^s 'Looney' was common slang for lunatics by the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is possible that this pauper gave his name as Looney the same way patients today not uncommonly give themselves self-parodying pseudonyms. Looney is also a commonish Irish name of course. There are four in the 2000 London phone directory; maybe he was just unfortunate.

Poplar did not make use of St Luke's Hospital much at all. No parish admissions are recorded in the St Luke's archive between 1800 and 1815 and only four between 1816 and 1830. Again it is inconveniently sited for that part of East London.

Poplar was considered by the Poor Law Commissioners of 1832 to be a model parish that others should emulate, having successfully achieved control of the outdoor relief bill to able-bodied paupers although continuing with out relief to sick and aged paupers.³³² Mr Gordon, a Trustee, outlined to Chadwick the scheme by which poor rates had been reduced, first by inducing labourers while in work to join the Poplar Savings Bank or another mutual benefit society and second by providing work schemes in which the able-bodied were employed as independent labourers. Poplar vestrymen were early hard-liners, putting many of the ideas of the new poor law into practice before the Amendment Act. After the Act when Poplar's well established tough approach came to dominate Poplar Union's policies, vestry thrift became more obvious in the management of insane paupers (see next chapter).

The scarce evidence on the management of lunatics under the old poor law at the beginning of the nineteenth century suggests that before the opening of Hanwell County Asylum in 1828 the eastern metropolitan parishes adopted a number of *ad hoc* solutions that were well established by tradition. In the early years of the century the troublesome, or at least the most resilient troublesome, insane were quite often sent with the refractory to pauper farms or if considered harmless, kept in local poorhouses. In St Sepulchre and other City parishes, outdoor relief was given to families to care for insane relatives or if people could manage on their own, to the afflicted individual. When an asylum was indicated, and this as largely determined by difficult, obviously 'mad' behaviour, overseers used the most convenient affordable local asylums that took paupers.

The popularity of Miles' Hoxton House and Warburton's houses at Bethnal Green is explained by their cheapness, their huge capacity to take in both urgent and chronic cases and their geographical convenience. It took quite some time, about 3-4 years, for Hanwell to establish itself as a competitive alternative. The cost had to be

substantially lower to compensate for the inconvenience of getting patients there and back and monitoring their progress. St Luke's Hospital was an option for the middling class of patient suffering a first episode of insanity. At the beginning of the nineteenth century parishes in close proximity used the voluntary hospital frequently, not so the parishes a little farther away. Use of St Luke's declined steadily up to the 1845 Lunatics Act. At the end of a year's treatment at St Luke's, if no cure had been effected, the parish was obliged to remove the patient and at that point, the pauper would be placed in one of the local licensed houses.

There is a hint that one parish, Shoreditch, may have been influenced by the adverse conditions exposed in the Select Committee report of 1827 but the documentation is too scanty to be sure. While there is evidence from the City parishes of payments to families to provide care at home, there are very few examples of boarding-out arrangements being made. It is possible these arrangements were not recorded separately from other categories of pauper. Eccentricity, oddity, peculiarity and frank madness were noted of course by sharp overseers like Sam Miller but madness was only of significant interest and worth recording for most overseers when it was of a degree that required containment in facilities separate from the ordinary workhouse or pauper farm. Parishioners actively sought out help from the vestry when they needed it. Young John Carr's parents chose to ask the parish to care for their simple son. Families were usually the instigators of the process that ended with a period in an institution except in emergency cases off the streets where the beadles brought the suicidal, wandering mad vagrants and the overtly crazy to the overseer for disposal.

In the closing years of the old poor law, parishes in East London were experiencing increasing difficulty in responding to the burgeoning numbers demanding relief. Edwin Chadwick, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for the eastern division of the metropolis selected copious evidence from the eastern parishes for the Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1832, incorporating many verbatim accounts of discussions with parish officials from his personal visits to the parishes. Chadwick selected his material carefully to illustrate the evils he wanted to root out. The picture he gives is a

partial one at best. The increasing burden on the ratepayers of the more populous parishes was however universally acknowledged.

“ My trade is declining,” complained Mr Hooker, a Poors Trustee in Bethnal Green. “So is the trade of my neighbours...respectable people are leaving the place, which makes it still worse.” Bethnal Green was sunk deep in debt, “if not absolutely bankrupt”, the houses deserted in consequence of the pressure of rates, “rents declining and ruin impending”. Hooker had no idea what could be done “I have not heard of anything; we cannot do any thing; we must depend on Providence; I do not see what is to save us from ruin if Government does not do something for us”.

Hooker’s plea was echoed by Mr Brushfield in Spitalfields:

The outcry for the establishment of some strict regulations is very generally increasing throughout our parish....I have said that I see no way but by some superior and central control being established....The subject has been the topic of conversation at our Board of Governors and it is agreed on all hands that some powerful central control ought to be established.³³³

Mr Single in Mile End Old Town agreed with him, pointing out that there were 800 unoccupied houses in the parish because poorer rate-payers left to live in parishes where the rates were lower.

The mechanics of allocating poor relief was beginning to break down. The new overseer in Bethnal Green complained "There were 400 people with new faces for me to pay the first night I sat. I had no-one to assist or inform me, I gave money away on the mere statements made to me; I am confident I paid some of the people twice over that night".³³⁴

The crowds hung around the St Pancras workhouse door “in the most corrupting state of idleness” complained the workhouse governor,

Their language and conduct are so degrading and obscene as to be a subject of heavy complaint with the neighbours and passengers; no decent female can approach them without being insulted, and I grieve to say that the young women especially seem to have entirely lost all sense of propriety, or rather of common decency; it is no unusual sight to see them upon these occasions in situations of indecency that are most

revealing....These very shameful practices have not subsisted for more than five or six years; but they have increased in force and frequency within that time...we have taken the parties before the magistrates but all to no purpose.³³⁵

St Luke's Parish made an attempt to control the crowds of 800 or so regulars by issuing cards for the time period of 15 minutes within which the applicants for relief were expected to turn up. They believed this avoided paying people twice and reduced the crowd to a manageable 50 at a time. Fraudulent claims of paupers were much commented on to the Royal Commission, so was the corruption and negligence of the employed assistant overseers. People in genuine need of help were arbitrarily refused because the overseers simply had insufficient time to make considered judgments.

John Coste, the Shoreditch relieving overseer was an unpopular, hard man detested in the parish and a source of immense irritation to the magistrates at the local Worship Street court. Having been turned down for relief by Coste, the Saturday night crowd then took themselves down to Worship Street to file an appeal. If the pauper declared under oath that he was entitled to relief the magistrate would issue a summons against the overseer. If this was ignored, a second or even a third summons would be issued or alternatively the magistrate could issue an urgent order for "immediate relief" to continue for 14 days or until the next petty sessions or select vestry meeting.

Mr Benett, one of three magistrates at Worship Street, was continually at loggerheads with Coste. Coste complained to Chadwick that

In consequence of the practice which one magistrate [Benett] has pursued at Worship street Police office, I do believe that if that magistrate had the undivided control, it would be impossible for our parishioners to pay the rates. Since June I have received from the magistrates of this office about 590 summons. Of these there were from Mr Benett 240, Mr Twyford 179, Mr Broughton 167. To these summonses of each were attached 190, 46 and 27 *nota benes* [urgent relief orders]. In the year 1827 I had as many as fifty names on one summons in a day from Mr Benett and I venture to say that of these above many were bad characters, prostitutes and thieves who ought not to be relieved at all. All this troop, about fifty persons came to my door, with an officer at the head of them, demanding immediate relief on the magistrate's order. I said 'No, I cannot think of letting the parish be robbed in this way; I shall attend the summons this night at the office'. I did attend and stated to Mr Benett that I should insist on the whole of those fifty cases being gone into separately before I gave any money.³³⁶

Mr Benett was unrepentant. In his view there was “an immense mass of paupers brought from the parish of Shoreditch who ought to have been relieved without the intervention of the magistrates”. Benett’s point was that the character of a pauper could not be taken into account if he was in distress.

The Poor Laws were not established as a reward for good conduct....a person just discharged from the house of correction or a prostitute is as much entitled to relief as the most respectable pauper in the parish because the principal of the English Poor law is that no-one shall starve.³³⁷

Benett was prepared to sit at the office until ten or eleven o’clock on Saturday nights hearing the second appeals of applicants turned away a second time by Coste and his assistant. One night Coste’s assistant shepherded a crowd of 105 down to Worship Street and flatly refused to relieve any of them. “When I remonstrated with him and desired to relieve such as were in real distress and bring those he objected to before me, declared that he cared not for me or the law and that he would not relieve one of them”

The Poor Law Report conceded that “ No-one can read Mr Benett’s evidence without being convinced of the excellence of his intentions” but criticised him anyway for throwing the onus of proof of eligibility onto the overseer rather than the pauper. Benett was in that happy position of public servants who have no responsibility for administering a budget but can indulge their idealism by advising others to spend theirs. Coste was at the front line, all too aware of the Trustees’ anxieties about rising costs of relief.

Drunkenness figures large as a cause of poverty among the applicants for relief in East London and in the relieving officers’ relief books and workhouse admission registers. Coste complained that “mechanics on high wages spent in a profligate fashion, mainly on drink, when out of work thus reducing themselves to paupers”. Samuel Miller in St Sepulchre thought there must be an “immense amount of fraud” by the nature of the outdoor relief system, although he seems to have inclined more to Benett’s principles than to Coste’s.

By far the greater proportion of our new paupers are persons brought upon the parish by habits of intemperance and the others are chiefly pauper children or hereditary paupers. After relief has been received at our Board, a great proportion of them proceed with the money to the palaces of gin-shops which abound in our neighbourhood.³³⁸

It seems unlikely that the solitary or quietly mad parishioner would get much attention among the seething mass of drunkards, Irish vagrants, prostitutes and canny labourers described by the eastern metropolitan parish overseers in the final years of the old poor law. It might be thought that only those who were outright destitute or the cause of public disorder or violence would be noticed at all. Yet the assessment and placement of the mentally disordered continued as before.

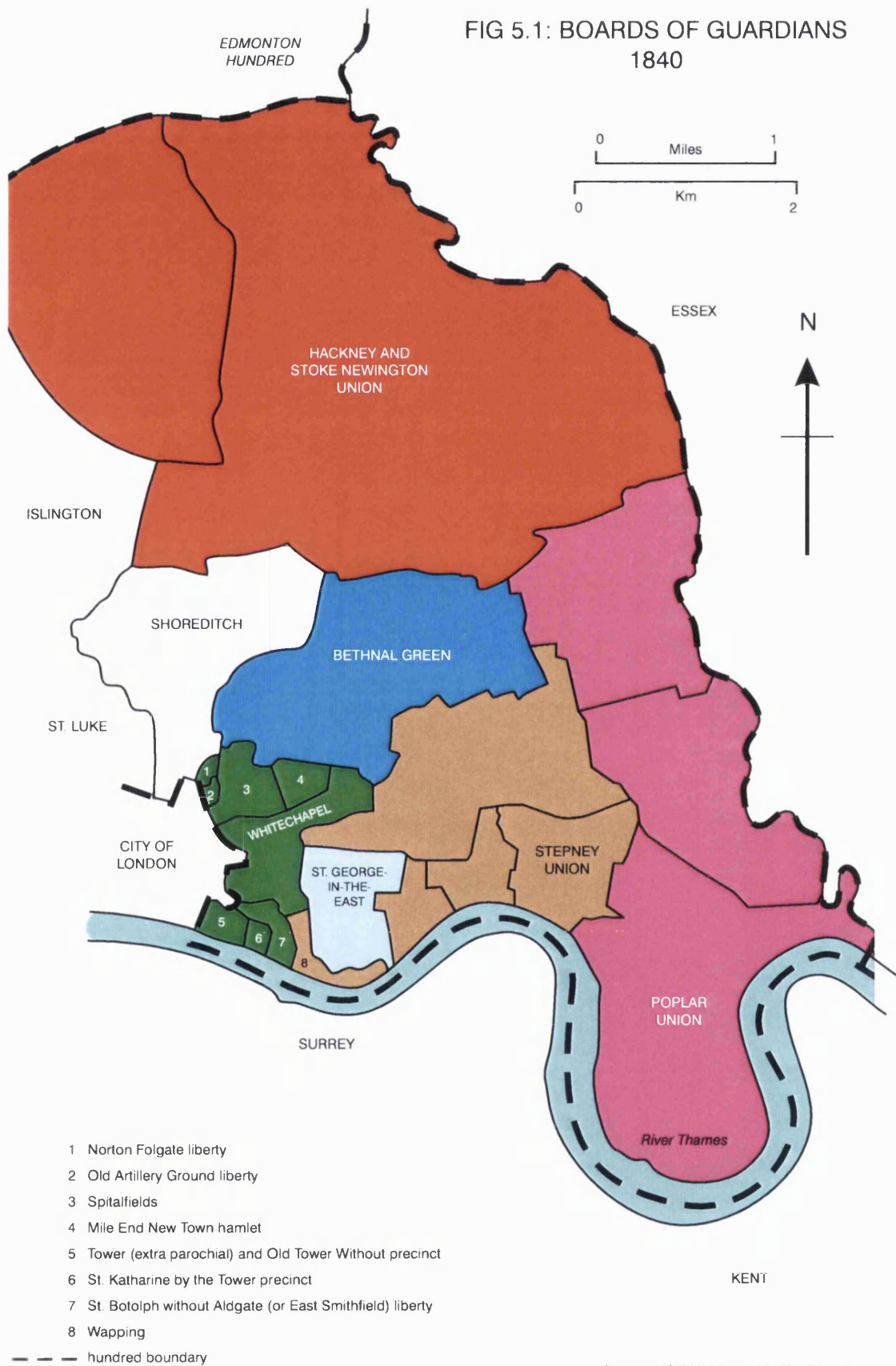
In the early years of the nineteenth century, troublesome lunatics were quite often sent to pauper farms for the refractory or to the local poorhouse/workhouse (these words were used as synonyms by London parishes). Soon however the already popular private licensed houses became the usual place to supervise pauper lunatics who required institutional care. The choice of placement was made on grounds of convenience and economy but also on long established relationships between the parish officers and local institutions.

If families could manage a lunatic member with additional out-relief then that was the most desirable solution but only rarely are such cases identified in the parish records. Overseers did not regard it as their business to identify problems at home unless the family sought financial support or demanded an alternative institutional solution. Out-relief was very much in the gift of the individual overseer, in the 1820s and early 30s in the hands of the employed professional assistant overseer. The laconic Sam Miller was an easier touch than the daunting John Coste; for parish read diversity.

It is difficult to know from reading the Trustees' minutes who was determining the culture of administration of poor relief in these early years. While the elected Guardians of the Poor and the Trustees clearly set some parameters by agreeing the poor rate and made formal decisions on which institution to use, the crucial

relationships between proprietors/keepers and parish officers were increasingly between employees on both sides. The era of 'public sector managers' had begun.

FIG 5.1: BOARDS OF GUARDIANS
1840



Source: VCH Middlesex Vol X, 1995 p2

Chapter 5: The Amendment Act and the New Boards of Guardians 1834-1855

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was the legislative response to the increasing resentment of rate-payers of the rising cost of poor relief through the post-war agricultural depression of 1815-30. Burgeoning numbers of unemployed able-bodied poor were perceived to be living a comfortable idle life at rate-payers' expense, the ready availability of dole sapping the moral fibre of the labouring classes. Lord Brougham, the parliamentary driving force, was voicing a public culture that represented the poor, especially the able-bodied workless poor, as morally reprehensible.³³⁹ Excessive hand-outs were ruining the country, it was thought and demoralising the poor; and contrariwise abolition of outdoor relief could restore labourers' self respect and promote their self governance.

In London, widespread business failures and unemployment followed Napoleon's commercial blockade of the continent. Poor harvests of 1810 and 11 exacerbated the distress of districts already suffering a downturn in trade such as the silk weaving industry and the port. Evangelical philanthropists reorganized the Spitalfields Soup Society and fed as many as 7000 people during the severe winters of 1811 and 12 in Bethnal Green, Shoreditch, Whitechapel and Mile End.³⁴⁰ Many Christian evangelists though were more impressed by Malthus's arguments about the "redundant population" than by humanitarian concerns for their welfare.³⁴¹ Cowherd finds that Malthus had more influence over poor law reformers than Bentham in the immediate post-war period.³⁴²

After a lull in national anxiety occasioned by the general economic prosperity of the years 1819-25, a further recession and rising unemployment in the industrial north led to increased poor relief expenditure and a widespread conviction that overpopulation lay at the root of the social evil of poverty and that the old poor law encouraged idleness and dependency. The new Whig government of 1830 was too embroiled in their Great Reform Bill to pay much attention to the poor law. As a temporary expedient they accepted the Tories' suggestions of land allotment for the workless and support of wages through local subsidies. As an interim holding strategy they set up a Royal Commission to investigate the poor laws further.

The Poor Law Amendment Act that emerged from the Royal Commission contained no new ideas. As Brundage points out, practically all the key components of the new system had been developed inside and outside parliament during the last fifty years or so of the old poor law. The challenge was to integrate them into a compulsory national pattern.³⁴³ The new poor law should be seen in the wider context of the nineteenth century 'revolution' in government administration. Parliamentary initiatives led to the reform and central regulation of factories, mines, education, public health, police and emigration. The imposition of government will through centralisation was more readily achieved in areas where there was no existing system governed by powerful interests. The poor laws were vital instruments for preserving rural social order and maintaining the dominant interests of landowning peers, the gentry and the rising factory owners. Mandler argues that the new law spoke to Tory concerns as well as Whig ones; it packaged a solution to the poverty problem that both traditionalists and reformers welcomed.³⁴⁴ Much of the support for the bill came from Tory landowners.

The new poor law did not replace the old order but rather strengthened the powers of traditional local leaders over their neighbourhoods. Its success depended on the local boards of guardians, not on central government. Local policies on relief were far less changed through the nineteenth century than the watershed event of the Amendment Act has the reputation for achieving. In towns as well as in rural areas outdoor relief supported four out of five people receiving relief before and after the Act. Attitudes to the poor by the propertied classes shifted back and forth; the harshness of some of the new provisions were relatively short-lived in most areas.³⁴⁵

The able-bodied poor were the main target of the new Act, but not for the first time, legislation designed to address one problem had an unfortunate effect on other groups encompassed in the same statute, in this case the sick and aged 'impotent' poor. Sick paupers, including the insane, were meant to benefit from the new legislation in that they were to be separately classified and have special facilities provided for them. In

the event the hardening attitude sanctioned by the Act caught all economically dependent groups in the same trap.

Whereas the old poor law conferred all the advantages and disadvantages of local variation in its administration, the new poor law imposed a central design meant to lead to national uniformity. The Benthamite principle of uniformity in the treatment of each category of destitute people was to be achieved by a central authority, which would regulate local administrators who were devoid of discretionary powers. The able-bodied were to receive relief only in workhouses, where life was to be made less “eligible”, that is less attractive, than that of ordinary independent labourers. The Act discouraged the merely poor from seeking relief.

A central board of commissioners was backed up by assistant commissioners, later called inspectors, who acted as agents in regional localities.³⁴⁶ Parishes were to be grouped into unions if the parish were insufficiently large to sustain a workhouse. Each local union had a Board of elected Guardians served by permanent salaried officials headed by the Clerk. The process of local implementation depended on the assistant commissioners and the views of the landed gentry and other locally influential JPs.³⁴⁷ The hundreds, the ancient local government units for petty sessions, were used as the basis for the formation of unions but final boundaries deviated because local landowners negotiated their estates into one union or another according to their predictions of advantage to themselves. Pre-existing Gilbert Unions, those established under Gilbert's Act in the last years of the eighteenth century (see p9), were sometimes reluctant to re-configure parishes into new unions, seeing no particular advantage in changing long-established working relationships. The new unions tended to be configured around existing workhouses, an example of 'capital led planning' that bedevils health and social care services today.

The new poor law became a bone of political contention in many urban areas. Whigs brought in the Act; it was necessarily challenged by the Tories, especially by the Tory magistracy. In London parishes it was the ultra-radical faction that noisily opposed the imposition of central control.³⁴⁸ Unions were intended to cover a population of

10,000 or so, to incorporate up to 30 parishes, with a central market town at the hub in provincial areas. In London the already huge parishes of inner urban areas of Middlesex, Kent and Surrey, such as Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, had no need to join up with other parishes, being sufficiently large to form their own Board Of Guardians.

Some of the large single parishes in the metropolitan area which had commissioned their own series of poor acts over the previous thirty years or so were content with existing structures and simply refused to form a Board of Guardians. Some unions were born from uniting only two or three parishes. St John at Hackney joined with St Mary Stoke Newington; Poplar joined with Bromley by Bow and Stratford le Bow. The smaller metropolitan parishes united with several neighbours. Most London parishes already had a workhouse, often a large one with several hundred inmates and were already classifying paupers on rudimentary criteria of age and health status.

The Poor Law Commission of 1832-4 had gathered from their assistant commissioners 26 volumes of information from 3000 or so parishes and townships on a 1 in 5 sample. There was ample evidence of striking differences in quality of buildings, anything from "a makeshift shambles of old farm buildings to a splendid mansion"³⁴⁹ and also in poor relief administration. The general mixed workhouse was particularly criticised as being too comfortable for the able bodied and the 'idle' and not designed either to cater for the needs of the aged, sick and infirm.³⁵⁰

Four separate kinds of institutions were promoted by the Poor Law Commissioners, one for children, two (male and female) for the able-bodied and one for the sick. New workhouse buildings were often huge monolithic single institutions with separate internal wards. There was surprisingly little use made of small pre-existing poorhouses. In theory these could have been adapted to a variety of uses, although many were in a poor state of repair. In East London the new unions incorporated a number of their existing workhouses into a rudimentary classification scheme where there was no immediate alternative, although proper classification into sick and able-bodied did not come until the development of separate workhouse infirmaries in the

late 1860s and 70s. Driver suggests that the question of classification lay at the heart of the new poor law discourse on workhouse policy, illustrating his thesis by reference to the treatment of insane paupers in separate wards.³⁵¹

Withdrawal of outdoor relief to the able-bodied poor in October 1835 provoked little overt trouble in London³⁵² whereas in the rest of the country, especially in the north, implementation of the rules was slower, so no general order barring outdoor relief to the able-bodied was issued until 1844. The implementation of the new act was a triumph of crafty political administration, in so far as the Poor Law Commission issued orders prohibiting outdoor relief in a given locality only when the local inspectors judged that the unions were ready for it. The Inspectors' main task was to be persuasive.³⁵³ The Poor Law Commission possessed few coercive powers; power over poor law spending remained with the Guardians. General orders were obligatory however and could in theory be enforced against a recalcitrant Board of Guardians through the courts. The Commission auditor could also disallow illegal expenditure. In practice these powers were used only to curb more blatant flouting of the Act.

The parishes of East London did not of course have a unified opinion on the Poor Law Amendment Act. The old parishes already exhibited striking differences of approach to managing their able-bodied poor. Nor were their opinions necessarily consistent internally. The elected vestry officials did not automatically share the views of their employed assistant overseers 'manning the barricades' against the Saturday night crowds seeking a bob or two to keep them going for the next week. The assistant overseers' voices are rarely heard in official minutes of vestry meetings or the Trustees of the Poor, but their professional insights were recorded by Chadwick in the Report of the Royal Commission in a style which gives their views equal weight with those of the elected officers. Perhaps this was because as the employed Secretary to the Commission, Chadwick himself wished to be regarded as on a par with the gentlemen Commissioners.

The eastern parishes debated the Act through the summer of 1834. The assistant overseers of the neighbouring parishes of St Andrew Holborn and St Sepulchre

Holborn, eventually to be united with the parish of St Luke Old Street as the St Luke and Holborn Union, held widely divergent views. The Webbs identified St Andrew Holborn as one of the parishes where the workhouse was used by the overseers “merely as a means of bargaining with the poor. By threatening to confine relief to the workhouse, the poor were induced to accept lower rates of outdoor relief and paupers in the house could be induced to go out on the promise of a weekly allowance.”³⁵⁴ “I am decidedly of the opinion”, said the assistant overseer, “that if we had an establishment into which we could receive all parties who applied to us, diet them according to their requirements, work them hard and restrict them from too easy access we should get rid of at least a third of those who are now a burden to us.”³⁵⁵

In the parish next door (the vestry rooms are 100 yards apart on either side of the more recent Holborn Viaduct), St Sepulchre Vestrymen met on 15th July 1834 specially to consider the Act.³⁵⁶ They did not like it at all. The Act was “not calculated to improve either the middle classes or lower classes or even benefit the higher classes of society in this Kingdom. Most of the provisions are arbitrary, unfeeling and unjust and that it invests a few individuals with a dangerous power of the liberty and property of their fellow countrymen”. In this mood of resentment, Sam Miller tetchily penned the vestry’s responses to the Commission’s long list of questions about workhouse facilities. Their workhouse in West Smithfield could hold 315 but was only suitable for 250. It was already crowded to excess, they had to farm out 22 “abandoned and refractory”. He had already responded in October 1833 to a barrage of other questions the Commission had asked at the beginning of their survey. There is a shortness in Miller’s tone which suggests the resentment felt by minor kingdoms on being annexed by an empire.

On the eastern border of the City St Botolph Aldgate elected officials and overseers considered the Poor Law Bill in September ’34.³⁵⁷ They decided not to comply with the full proposals, to give outdoor relief as before to the aged and infirm and continue to give “bread and cheese and articles of absolute necessity” but not money to the able-bodied. A week later, the reasons are unclear, they resolved to discontinue relief to the outdoor poor except to “such as are infirm, affected or necessitous”. The

Committee were profoundly disquieted at the implications for their parish poor and resolved to visit every parish pauper in regular receipt of outdoor relief the following Sunday morning, going in pairs. The idea was to decide what to do next and see whether some should be invited into the workhouse.³⁵⁸ There is sadly no outcome recorded from these visits. During 1834 and 1835 St Botolph accepted the inevitable and stopped most outdoor relief.

In striking contrast to the liberal City parishes (or profligate, depending on one's view), All Saints Poplar, one of the largest and by 1830 one of the poorest parishes in East London, had already brought in a strict regime, as noted earlier. Poplar Union adopted the parish approach and remained rigidly tight-fisted for the next 70 years, creating the perfect breeding ground for socialism and the eventual backlash of Poplarism.³⁵⁹

Shoreditch Parish Trustees perceived that a central board would undermine their authority and opposed the idea. They supported the general aims of the legislation and indeed implemented many of the provisions in the new act in advance of its passing, under their own local powers. The minutes of the Trustees' meetings in the early 1830s suggest an embattled committee grappling with serious budget problems but not quite getting on top of the huge task of managing the local poor. At one point in 1834 as part of a cost cutting exercise they proposed to reduce the relieving officer John Coste's salary from £150 to £100 per annum. On second thoughts they decided to sack his assistant Mr Linsey instead, to save £75 per annum.³⁶⁰ The already beleaguered Coste had then to act as both visiting officer and relieving officer. They were proud of Coste's hard line on outdoor relief and delighted when he delivered a 30% cut in expenditure between March 34 and March 35.³⁶¹

While Shoreditch packed an agenda of urgent matters into their weekly meetings, barely keeping their heads above the tidal wave of business, their northerly neighbours' meetings in St John at Hackney were more ponderous, leisurely affairs in the early '30s. Some of their resolutions at their fortnightly meetings suggest they had too much time on their hands. The quality of blue granite for the stone-breaking yard

was a frequent matter of concern. Considerable argument ensued about Mr Green's resolution that no parish money should be spent on "charts, maps and globes" for the pauper school because "geography is an unsuitable subject for teaching pauper children."³⁶² The arguments were batted to and fro over the next three meetings, with no resolution. Eventually they compromised; globes yes,^a but charts and maps, no!

Hackney vestry appointed a sub-committee of 9 to follow the progress of the Act. A motion from James Young and 10 supporters to oppose it outright was defeated.³⁶³ The next meeting was acrimonious; resolutions were crossed out, reversed, amended and revised until the pro-new poor law group triumphed. One vestryman, probably James Young or Mr Gadsden, opposed every resolution required to implement the Act over the next year. Gadsden declared "that the Bill is in many of its clauses being most arbitrary, injurious to the parishioners and alike, unjust and discouraging to the poor". Hackney Trustees were ineffectual and argumentative. Their poorhouse was a dilapidated, shambolic, dirty but relatively expensive institution. Even with 400 inmates, the weekly cost per person was something over 4s 4d per week, one of the highest in London. Hackney was looking to the new poor law to help them keep their costs down and the rate-payers happy. The new Union Board of Guardians was in effect the old Hackney Trustees with a small complement of Stoke Newington Guardians tacked on.

Although Shoreditch extraordinarily managed to cling on to its old structure of Trustees for another twenty years, the majority of Parish Trustees of the Poor were disbanded over the next few years, the old order giving way to the new central direction and surveillance by the Poor Law Commission. Most of the parishes in the East End had formed boards of guardians by 1837. Figure 5.1 opposite map opposite shows the map of Boards of Guardians for 1840.

The new poor law of insanity. The insane were simply another category of pauper to be subjected to the new regulations. There was minimal guidance in the new act and

^a Earlier in 1834 Hackney had decided to put forward a number of pauper orphan children for the juvenile emigration scheme to the new Colony at the Cape of Good Hope. One is curious to know if

little at first from the Poor Law Commission on how the lunatic problem should be dealt with. There was only one ambiguously worded reference to the care of lunatics in the new Act, that "any dangerous Lunatic, insane person, or Idiot" should not be detained in a workhouse for longer than 14 days but removed to an insane asylum.³⁶⁴ Lunacy was only rarely the subject of Poor Law Commissioners' Reports or General Orders. It took until 1842 for the Commission to clarify the vague wording about the removal of lunatics from the workhouse in the Act, when they issued a special instruction under the General Order for Workhouses.^{365 b}

No pauper of unsound mind who may be dangerous or who may have been reported as such by the medical officer for the workhouse, or who may require habitual or frequent restraint, shall be detained in the workhouse for any period exceeding 14 days.

During 1843 the Commission decided to take a more interventionist approach to the Guardians' management of lunatics. It is not clear whose idea it was but Kay, who became Assistant Commissioner for District No 4 (Middlesex, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk) in 1840, used the technique effectively to get paupers moved to asylums. Under the provisions of 5 and 6 Vic. C57, sec 6, unions were obliged to transmit a list of paupers of unsound mind chargeable to the poor rates to the Commission on an annual basis, "to enable us to inquire into cases which apparently were improperly retained in the workhouse or which ought to have been sent to an asylum."³⁶⁶ The Acts provided for the Boards of Guardians to apply to the local magistrates for an order to send a lunatic to an asylum under 9 Geo IV c40. If this convenient provision had not been made "we should have found it impossible to press the necessity of taking steps which were legally the province of parish officers."³⁶⁷

the scheme's beneficiaries had a clue where they were going.

^b The same year they added more guidance on "strayed children and insane persons wandering abroad", applying specifically to the metropolitan areas of Middlesex and Surrey, where several unions shared a small geographical area and it was relatively easy for lost souls to wander into a 'foreign' union's jurisdiction. The Clerk was to fix a notice to the workhouse gate 24 hrs after the arrival of the lost wanderer and also send a notice to the three Metropolitan and City police stations nearest to the point where the person was found. Special forms were prescribed as usual-form A for children, form B for insane persons. There had been several instances of lost lunatics being admitted as casuals to workhouses very near to their own homes (there was only 100 yards distance from Stepney Workhouse

We are deeply convinced that paupers of unsound mind should, where there is a chance of cure, be sent to an asylum as soon as possible after the commencement of their malady. On receipt therefore of the lists of lunatics in the course of last autumn, we...[called] attention to the extreme importance of suffering no motive of economy to deter the Guardians from sending pauper patients to an asylum where they might receive proper treatment at as early a time as possible....The more recent a case of insanity is, the greater is the chance of cure; therefore humanity and sound policy equally demand that persons so situated should receive the best professional aid and at as early a stage of possible of their malady.

So the medical approach stressing the need to treat and the aspiration to cure became official Poor Law Commission policy, superseding the 'safe custody' rationale. Kay was the only medical assistant commissioner and may well have been the instigator of the policy, which he adopted with his customary enthusiasm. The Commission inquired about 115 individuals in 1843 and as a consequence 15 were sent to asylums; the following year, 24 were removed out of 137 inquiries and 5 of these were from Kay's district from Wapping in Stepney. Even taking this approach it was clearly impractical to remove most insane paupers from workhouses because there were insufficient asylum places. Out of 13,000 or so declared lunatics in England and Wales in 1842-3, only just over 42% were in asylums or licensed houses. The percentage was even lower, between 6 and 8%, in Wales where there were no public asylums and few licensed houses.³⁶⁸

Stepney Union. The largest Union in East London, Stepney was a curious amalgamation of parishes which almost encircled the parish of St George in the East. From 1836 to 1857, when the most populous parish of Mile End Old Town separated to form its own Board of Guardians, Stepney Union administered poor relief in the parishes and hamlets of Mile End Old Town, Stepney, Limehouse, Shadwell, Wapping and Ratcliff, this latter Hamlet lying in a thin strip along the river, a notoriously undesirable area even in the 1830s. The population of nearly 91,000 in 1841 was three times the size of Poplar and more than double that of St George in the East or Hackney and Stoke Newington. Its nearest rival in size was Bethnal Green at just over 74,000.

at Wapping and St George in the East workhouse over the parish border) and relatives not discovering them for several weeks.

The Board met for the first time just before Christmas in December 1836 and appointed as their clerk William Baker Junior³⁶⁹ “a sober and intelligent man”, at a salary of £200 per year.³⁷⁰ In terms of clerical activity per pound the Guardians certainly got their money’s worth. Mr Baker’s minutes are effortlessly elegant, well constructed full minutes reflecting the process of decision making in a way few minutes do, so they are naturally vast; acres of foolscap paper were covered every week. The outgoing letters books, preserved in only a handful of unions (unlike the incoming letters and orders which are often extant), add a wealth of information to the material in the minutes.³⁷¹ Mr Baker was a lawyer by training and his salary was soon increased to £250 on the basis that he also carried out the Board’s legal work as part of his duties. Regrettably however, Stepney Union, efficient, just, fair, the East London Union which received most approbation from the Poor Law Commission during these early years, was so keen on the needs of the parish pauper children that the Board rarely got round to discussing the care of lunatics. They addressed the expense of lunatic placements in an *ad hoc* kind of way when an individual case arose, and could get as exercised as neighbouring Boards about a permanent unwelcome expense but never discussed the matter as an agenda item between 1836 and 1846. Their policy in practice was to care for as many of their lunatics as possible in one of their own specially designated workhouses with a special nurse appointed for the task.

The 1842 parliamentary returns on pauper lunatics, which the Board submitted late, having failed to persuade Dr. Conolly and his colleague at Hanwell to complete on their behalf, (and were therefore obliged to pay their own medical officers extra to complete the forms³⁷²), record that Stepney retained nearly half (48%) of their lunatics in a local workhouse.³⁷³ They spent a middle-of-the-range amount on individual placements at Hanwell and private asylums and were average spenders on lunatics compared with their neighbours in East London.

The Guardians inherited several usable, if not ideal, workhouses and from the outset they began the task of classification, shifting paupers around the district institutions

until they had accumulated the 'homogeneous' groups designated by the Poor Law Commission. The able-bodied men and older boys went to Limehouse workhouse, the women and older girls to Wapping, the children to Mile End and the aged and infirm to Ratcliff, but only if they were "reduced by misfortune, and had exemplary conduct".³⁷⁴ At the close of 1836 there were 352 aged and infirm, 230 men and boys over 8 years old, 251 women and girls over 12, and 287 children.³⁷⁵ Lunatics were placed in two special wards at Wapping workhouse adjacent to the women's needlework room.

Stepney Board was convinced that the pauper children should be "removed from vice and depravity, given an opportunity of being instructed in their religious and moral duties free from contamination and receive an education suitable to their station".³⁷⁶ As early as February 1837, Stepney set about the task of creating their ideal children's institution at Mile End.³⁷⁷ A high proportion of their minutes is concerned with achieving this priority.

Stepney's influential Visiting Committee, usually chaired by Robert Stephenson, took their duties very seriously. Every visit was followed by a long-winded report to the Board, incorporating suggestions for improvements in the fabric and organisation of the institution, gave detailed advice to the various paid officers and pressed the Board to spend its money on the Visiting Committee's perceived priorities. The work of this Committee was relentless and at times their opinion diverged from the main Board, the Visiting Committee being inclined to recommend that more money should be spent than the full Board felt wise.

It was the Visiting Committee who set the high-minded tone toward the children, that "they may be brought up in a system calculated to eradicate in the rising generation the baneful feelings of pauperism".³⁷⁸ Separation and education were their key recommendations. Dr James P Kay Shuttleworth,^c the local Assistant Commissioner whose fervent aspirations for children were well known, was a natural ally of the

^c Kay became Kay-Shuttleworth on his marriage in 1840.

Visiting Committee and approved highly of Stepney's dedication to the children's welfare.³⁷⁹

The Visiting Committee further concerned themselves with every aspect of the physical, mental and moral well being of the inmates of all the workhouses and institutions. Their ten page report on the religious and spiritual needs of the inmates in late 1839, based on an 'in-depth' inquiry into the hours and activities of the chaplains must have taken many hours of work by the elected officers.

It was the Visiting Committee who made the final decision on whether lunatics should be removed from the workhouse lunatic wards to a private asylum or Hanwell. For example they visited Wapping Workhouse at the request of the medical officers to examine their recommendation that four paupers should be removed to Bethnal Green Asylum to await places at Hanwell.³⁸⁰ The Committee agreed to the removal of Mary Moran "occasionally violent, likely to recover under a proper course of treatment", but "do not see the necessity for the removal of Ann Morse or Rebecca Rowley - and recommend they continue under Mrs Ransom's care". Mrs Ransom was an attendant specially employed to look after people maintained in the lunatic wards at Wapping. The Committee deferred a decision about Margaret Waterers, requesting that the Guardians representing St Anne's Limehouse parish, who knew the woman previously, should be the final arbiters about her removal. Finally they decided Jane Sallnow should go to Bethnal Green. She had first made her appearance in the Board minutes in 1837 when she was reported to "exhibit symptoms of mental aberration but was not decidedly insane".³⁸¹ Two years later, she decidedly was. The St Anne's Guardians visited Margaret Waterers as requested and found her

occasionally violent and her language indecent. Frequently in the habit of making great noise during the night which disturbs other lunatic patients. There is little possibility of recovery [but], her removal to Bethnal Green would benefit other paupers.³⁸²

Their report implies that the expense of Bethnal Green Asylum normally had to be justified on the grounds of susceptibility to treatment.

Mrs Ransom, the lunatic nurse, had been appointed in early November 1839 to assist Mrs Megson, the Matron at Wapping workhouse.³⁸³ The workhouse at Wapping had been in the charge of the Master, Mr Phillips until 1838. Phillips was the subject of complaints about ill treatment of three pauper girls that resulted in his censure.³⁸⁴ He seems to have been out of his depth. He was unable to stop Eliza Felton, the nurse in the lunatic wards from repeatedly striking one of the patients.³⁸⁵ Phillips had to go. In January 1839 the Board decided to appoint the respected Mrs Megson, the Matron of Wapping, as the “Master” at a salary of £70 per annum and advertise the post of “sub master” at £30 per annum “subordinate to the Matron”.³⁸⁶ This splendid attempt at 'equal opportunities' for women employees was quickly thwarted by a dampening letter from Somerset House, “the Commissioners entertain considerable doubt whether so large an establishment as that of the Wapping Workhouse can safely be committed chiefly to the charge of a female.”³⁸⁷ For the same money they could get a man just as easily. The Guardians compromised by suggesting they appoint a Master and Matron on salaries of £50 each, to which the Commission agreed.³⁸⁸ The Guardians however always regarded Mrs Megson as in charge at Wapping. When their workhouse masters attended meetings they were always referred to as “The Masters and Mrs Megson”. So she got the respect, and the responsibility but £20 less than her peers.

Mrs Megson reorganised the lunatic wards at Wapping with the support and detailed advice of the Visiting Committee, swapping round the wards to provide more convenient space, acquiring a new sink, painting over the window of the new lunatic ward “to prevent them being overlooked” and increasing the height of the wall outside the yard where the lunatics exercised so they would not be an object of curiosity to the other paupers.³⁸⁹ If there were the usual ambivalent feelings and mixed motives for secluding the behaviourally untidy, Mrs Megson never revealed them.

Mrs Megson seems to have been a thoughtful woman. When John Cain, a 65 year old pauper fell off a scaffolding while white lime-washing the staircase at Wapping workhouse and was taken into the London Hospital, Mrs Megson sent him parcels of tea and sugar. There are numerous similar examples of Mrs Megson’s requests to the

Guardians to provide a little extra benefit for special cases.³⁹⁰ It was under Mrs Megson's regime that the post of lunatic nurse was advertised in November 1839. Mrs Ransom was in fact the only candidate.³⁹¹ The number of lunatics kept at Wapping gradually went down. A more active policy of placing them out was possibly due to Mrs Megson's influence. Reducing the numbers allowed them to cut the lunatic wards from two to one and to exchange the large lunatic ward with the needlework room, giving more space for the pauper women's daily sewing.

A new general medical order was issued by the Poor Law Commission in February 1843 setting out the maximum population (15,000) and maximum area (15,000 sq acres) that one parish doctor could legally cover.³⁹² Stepney Union objected strongly to the expense for what they perceived to be unnecessarily generous provision. They felt Mile End Old town was satisfactorily covered by doctors at local free dispensaries and the London Hospital.^d They were in the middle of recruiting a fifth doctor, Daniel Ross, an addition to Robert Heelis, Adolphus Barnett, John Story and George Alexander Falconer. Even with five, the average population per doctor was over the limit. Stepney felt that it would be better to pay a smaller number of doctors more salary and, rather than have more cheap ones, recruit better candidates.³⁹³ Doctors were easy to come by in London but their quality was considered poorer than outside London.³⁹⁴ The correspondence between the Union and the Commission continued for many months, the Commission at last agreeing to the Union's proposals, although this set no precedent nationally.³⁹⁵ Many other unions simply ignored the ruling. It is typical of Stepney that they wanted the Commission to approve their approach.

Daniel Ross, who had been a qualified surgeon and apothecary for just four years, was a good appointment. Posted to Wapping workhouse, he became the medical officer responsible for the lunatic wards. Ross and Mrs Megson rapidly formed an alliance, cemented by his first swift demonstration of effectiveness when a month after his arrival he persuaded the Board to insert a new ceiling in the leaky foul ward.³⁹⁶ It was as well that Mrs Megson acquired a new ally because in March that year, the

^d The Eastern Dispensary at the junction of Alie Street, Aldgate is now a pub/wine bar called the Old Dispensary.

indefatigable star of the Visiting Committee, Robert Stephenson, stepped down from the Board.

The tenor of the minutes changed subtly from 1843 to 1846, there is something less animated and enthusiastic about the Baker of 1846 compared with the Baker of 1836. Ten years of tireless work took its toll perhaps on this estimable public servant. The annual cycle of repetitive administrative work for which union clerks carried a heavy responsibility must have been tough in a huge impoverished district like Stepney.

Ross favoured removal of the more disturbed lunatics to Hanwell and the Board, as usual, considered cases on an individual basis. The Board delegated the task of making the annual return of lunatics in 1844 jointly to the medical officers as they had in the previous two years, requesting them to visit Hanwell, the other private lunatic asylums and the several workhouses to inspect every insane patient.^e Ross, who like many other union doctors regularly submitted his monthly paperwork late to the Clerk, omitted to sign the Annual Return for Wapping Workhouse lunatic wards, delaying the submission, which was already late by a week, for a further week while his signature was obtained.³⁹⁷

The rising annual return numbers may have caused concern,³⁹⁸ or perhaps Ross and Mrs Megson had been pressing the Guardians for more support because of the workload. The Board considered the possibility of employing another paid nurse for the Wapping lunatic wards. Ross had identified several patients at Wapping who he described as “dangerous” in the returns, and the Board, conscious of its obligations to place them in asylums, resolved that they should be removed from the workhouse forthwith,

^e Mr Baker confessed as early as 1838, that he found some difficulty in “properly discriminating between different descriptions of mental infirmity” for the purpose of making the annual return “and have therefore thought it better to send a statement of all paupers affected with any disorder of the intellect according to the best information I have been able to obtain but which is not in all cases as full and satisfactory perhaps as could be wished” (St BG/L/97/2 Letters out book 18 August 1838). Given Mr Baker’s gift for expansiveness it is unlikely the returns were less comprehensive than other Unions. He added “you will perceive that there are some idiots included which perhaps was not the intention of the Committee who have called for the Return, although we should have no difficulty in selecting hereafter the parties most fitted by the nature of their malady for reception in your asylum”.

except the little girl Suzanna Girling who in the opinion of the Board can with more propriety be allowed to continue in the lunatic ward at Wapping under a proper paid nurse and where her relatives will have an opportunity of seeing her periodically as heretofore.³⁹⁹

This same child Susan Girling "afflicted with fits" had been the subject of complaints by relatives that she had been injured in the workhouse. Ross was adamant that no such injuries had been inflicted by staff and Mrs Megson had been exonerated by the Board after a full inquiry. This was the likely reason why the Board wanted to reassure relatives about her care.⁴⁰⁰ This is one instance of a Board retaining a patient in the workhouse for the convenience of family visits.

Admissions of Lunatics. All emergency cases were dealt with by one of the three union relieving officers, who were responsible for responding to requests from the local residents when medical or social help was required. The relieving officer visited and if he thought medical assistance was needed he would send for the parish doctor who covered the local area, issuing him with a medical order or ticket.⁴⁰¹ The doctor would admit an urgent case immediately to the appropriate workhouse for the age and sex of the patient. Few went straight away to the lunatic wards at Wapping because of lack of space. There are numerous letters from Baker to individual doctors informing them of Board decisions about their applications to have individuals removed from one of the workhouses to an asylum. If the Board approved, then the letter was worded "the patient(s) be removed to Hanwell County Lunatic Asylum if possible, if not, to a private asylum agreeable to the recommendation of the medical officer". The medical officer and relieving officer then sought an order at the magistrate's court to "detain" and transfer the patient to an asylum. Since transfer to an asylum was reserved for "dangerous" cases, presumably some lunatics were transferred from the local workhouse to Wapping but there is no correspondence referring to this. From 1844 the Board delegated the choice of private asylum to the parish doctor. Baker organised for several cases to be considered as a single agenda item every few weeks and the vast majority of the doctors' recommendations were accepted.

Just as Samuel Byles and John Liddle in Whitechapel (see below) were able to use the Lunatics Acts of 1845 and the advent of the Lunacy Commission to press even harder

for the transfer of workhouse lunatics to Hanwell and other local asylums, so did Daniel Ross and Mrs Megson. A circular from the Poor Law Commission in 1845 called attention to a new ruling that medical certification of insanity must be completed by doctors who were **not** employed as doctors to the Union and also to the need to remove all lunatics to asylums.⁴⁰² Baker was not at all happy with the circular and wrote to the Commission asking “whether the Board is obliged to pay the fees of doctors giving medical certificates who are not parish doctors”.⁴⁰³ Baker must have known the answer to this one after nine years of correspondence with Chadwick and his successor Lumley. There was no other source of funds except those of the Union. This was Baker’s polite way of complaining.

Baker and the Board had reason to be concerned about the financial implications of the guidance in September ’45 since they had just received two letters from Wapping workhouse, one from Daniel Ross listing “8 insane women and 6 idiots” that he wanted to send to an asylum. Ross interpreted the new Act to mean all lunatics must go to an asylum. “It will be my duty to authorise removal”. A second letter from Mrs Megson requesting removal from the workhouse of the same 14 people.⁴⁰⁴ The Board agreed to remove all but one. Mrs Megson reported to the Board on 11 September 1845 that 13 lunatics and idiots had been removed to Grove House Lunatic Asylum (Byas’s) in Bow, there being no room at Hanwell.⁴⁰⁵

Stepney considered many individual cases in depth. We first meet William Whiskeard (variously Wiskard, Wiskeard but alias Thomas Fitch) in a letter Baker wrote in late November ’38 in response to an initiative from Hanwell that Whiskeard should be transferred to Hanwell from Hoxton House Asylum, where he had been placed on a Secretary of State’s Order, having been confined “after commission of a crime while labouring under insanity”.⁴⁰⁶ Baker asked how this was to be achieved; did the asylum secretary know how it could be done? The Secretary at Hanwell suggested Baker should write to Secretary of State, Lord John Russell pointing out the availability of a suitable placement at Hanwell and the cost advantages of such a move.⁴⁰⁷ Baker did as suggested but no approval was forthcoming. Two years later however, Whiskeard, still at Hoxton, petitioned the next Home Secretary, the Marquis

of Normandy, that he was no longer insane and should not be confined. The Under-secretary at the Home Department asked Baker to make enquiries locally.⁴⁰⁸ Mr Heelis, medical officer for Limehouse and Mr Warren, the relieving officer went to see Whiskeard, having engaged Joseph Eyre, MD at a fee of £3-3s to give an additional independent medical opinion.^f They “heard the highly favourable account from the resident medical officer and were of the opinion that he was not insane and secondly that his case was a proper one for the exercise of mercy and that he could be safely restored to society.”⁴⁰⁹

The Board wrote to the Secretary of State “hoping the prisoner would be set at liberty.” The Home Department agreed, on the grounds that he had friends to support him.⁴¹⁰ The ‘friends’ were his wife Jane, his chief supporter and advocate throughout and their daughter. Curious to see the object of concern, the Chairman of the Board summoned Whiskeard and his wife to a Board meeting, proceeded to admonish him in public for his previous behaviour and then “he was strictly cautioned by the Chairman in regard to his future conduct.” The Chairman was evidently pleased with his performance on this occasion; it was resolved the clerk would write to the Home Department to convey the Board’s judgement that “Mr Whiskeard and his wife both appear duly impressed with their position.”⁴¹¹

Whiskeard did not remain ‘impressed’ for long. Two years later he was confined again, this time in Bethnal Green Asylum (Warburton’s). His wife Jane and their daughter once more petitioned the Board for his release.⁴¹² The evidence in support of Mr Whiskeard’s release was his apparent sanity on his regular outings on leave from Warburton’s. Understandably put out as to how Whiskeard “came to be suffered to be at large” when the Board were paying for him to be confined, particularly as only a month earlier, “Mr Whiskeard was certified as dangerous,” the Board summoned a keeper from Warburton’s to explain. Isaac Jones merely stated that “Mr Phillips (the medical officer at Warburton’s) allowed him out occasionally in order to see his wife.” At this point in the meeting, “Mr Whiskeard appeared”. There is an

^f Mr Heelis got an extra £2 2s too.

uncharacteristic and disappointing omission of what he said but the Board “resolved not to interfere with Mr Phillip’s decision” and Whiskeard once more got his freedom.

The uncoordinated system of parish settlements and the entitlement of parish overseers to claim money from relatives for the maintenance of lunatics could lead to extreme hardship for relatives. Stepney Union took up the case of an elderly couple thrown on the Union for support. Mary Ann Lovenewton wrote to the Poor Law Commission in late 1840 to complain that she and her husband were penniless as a result of their pension being stopped to care for her husband’s two lunatic sons.⁴¹³ As was customary, the Commission sent on the letter to the relevant Union where the petitioner had a settlement, in this case Stepney where Lovenewton was born. Lovenewton had been a carpenter in the Royal Navy and provided with a navy pension. He had supported his two sons at home until nine months earlier when the elderly couple’s health deteriorated and they could no longer look after them. Greenwich magistrates - they were then living in Greenwich - sent the two lunatic sons to Kent County Lunatic Asylum to await removal to their appropriate places of settlement. Their father’s previous occupational mobility gave George, age 43, a settlement in Devonport and Richard, 32, a settlement in Gateshead. In the past three months, both had been removed to asylums chosen by their respective unions, George to one in Devenport, Richard to Durham. The local overseers each acquired a charge over a quarter of the father’s pension but also made a claim for retrospective funding for the period to cover the first months of admission. Mr and Mrs Lovenewton’s entire income had been arbitrarily stopped three months earlier, leaving the sick Mr Lovenewton and his wife “in deep distress, a case of extreme hardship”. The Union felt obliged to support them with out relief while the funding was sorted out.

The Stepney Guardians were above all a fair-minded lot. The appointment and support of Mrs Megson^g is one example of them 'thinking laterally' in an attempt to be

^g What Happened to **Mrs Megson**? (See Chapter 7 for Dickens' comments on Mrs Megson). Mrs Megson had been Matron and Master at Wapping for over twenty years when Stepney Union decided in 1862 to expand their pauper capacity by closing Wapping and Ratcliff workhouses and building a new larger mixed workhouse on a spacious site at Bromley by Bow in Poplar Union’s patch. (ST BG/L/31). Mrs Megson had been pressing for better facilities ever since she was appointed but she very nearly did not move with her charges when the new institution was built. It occurred to the

fair-minded. There is another amusing if macabre example. When a pauper died, three male pauper companions would be sent with the funeral party to carry the coffin and dig the grave. It was a loathsome job, the pauper burial grounds were filled with the putrid stench of decay; the nauseous work of digging through the thin layer of topsoil frequently meant digging up rotting remains of last week's bodies.⁴¹⁴ In October 1838, three paupers were before the Board charged with having absconded after the funeral, staying out late into the evening and returning in a drunken state.⁴¹⁵ The Board, considering how distressing and unpleasant the work was, decided that in future, funeral paupers would be 'rewarded' if they returned home sober directly after a funeral with a pint of porter each. Whether this was enough to prevent a recurrence is not reported!

Chairman and the Clerk that if two workhouses were closing and a new one opened then the position of the workhouse officers had "to be considered". (St BG/L/32, p10 15.1.1863). The Clerk consulted the Poor Law Board (p48), whose advice was unequivocal—that existing staff must all lose their jobs when Ratcliff and Wapping closed on or before 25 March 1863. New advertisements must be placed. This news was conveyed by the Clerk to Mrs Megson and to Mr Lowing, the young workhouse master at Ratcliff. The medical officers were more fortunate; they could keep their district responsibilities at the same salaries. The members of the Workhouse Completion Committee, a subcommittee of the Board, were not at all pleased at the prospect of losing Mrs Megson, whose advice on the design and management of the new female wards they were relying (p72). They wanted her to be appointed Matron at Bromley at her current salary of £80 per annum but agreed that there should be a new Master appointed overall for this much larger new institution, recommending a salary of £100 per annum. The main board disagreed; it was time for a new broom. Mrs Megson must go and they would advertise for a new Master at a salary of £120. The subcommittee refused to accept this decision and continued their campaign to save Mrs Megson's job. The Wapping porter and his wife, Mr and Mrs Timewell, were offered new jobs at Bromley and in their letter of acceptance cheekily added that they were "willing to act in any capacity under the direction of our present Matron" (p75). By the end of February the Board relented and agreed Jane Megson's transfer to Bromley (p99) but decided to advertise for a Master at the higher salary as well. Mr Lowing withdrew his application for the new Master's post, he "feared he had not sufficient experience for so large a workhouse" and successfully applied for a post as a relieving officer in Lambeth (p104). James Hale from Hollingbourn Union was appointed Master (p112) but it emerged afterwards that he had resigned from his previous post as a result of "accounts of intoxication". "I do not think he is a habitual drunkard" his old Chairman wrote in mitigation, "a small amount of liquor excites him"(p128). Hale was dismissed. A new search began. Mrs Megson's transfer to Bromley was sanctioned by the Poor Law Board on 24 March 1863, the day before the old workhouse began to close. During January 1863 when the Chairman and the Board seemed to have lost confidence in Mrs Megson there was a very serious complaint by Elizabeth Land of Shadwell about her treatment of her "poor deranged sister" Amelia Ritchie, a middle-aged widow who was subject to periods of melancholia. Mrs Land complained to the Commissioners in Lunacy that Dr Ross and the staff at Wapping workhouse had kept Mrs Ritchie in a strait waistcoat for five days before sending her to Colney Hatch. The Guardians' enquiries confirmed Mrs Land's account was correct; Ross and Mrs Megson had not done well in this instance. (Mrs Ritchie subsequently recovered and was discharged home on June 25th, only to be readmitted to Hanwell shortly afterwards). It may have been this incident which led the Guardians to consider whether Mrs Megson was the right person for the new post.

Mr Baker did not like thoughtless or sharp practice nor engage in it. He sent a cross letter to Warburton's for sending back to the workhouse a lunatic who had just been transferred from Bedford Asylum to Warburton's at the Union's request, but who had arrived without the financial papers correctly signed as a result of an error in Bedford.⁴¹⁶ Why did the asylum not send a messenger to collect the papers "in view of the proximity and considering the great number of patients belonging to this Union who are maintained at your establishment?"

There is only one event documented in the letters book which taken at face value seems to seek preferential financial treatment for a family known personally to one or more of the Guardians.⁴¹⁷ The letter is worded in very particular fashion that suggests Baker had been obliged to send it. He seeks the Commissioners' view of whether the Union has powers to forego placing a charge over the assets of an insane aged woman, Mary Meardmore, who lives with her brother-in-law Mr Gibson, should she in future require care in an asylum. "The parties are known to some of the Guardians who feel anxious to relieve the brother-in-law from the charge of the lunatic's maintenance prospectively". Placing a charge to defray expenses "might tend unless exercised within the scope of the Poor Law Administration a class of applicants who might otherwise deem it derogatory to become recipients of parochial relief". In other words Mrs Meardmore's income was keeping Mr Gibson too and his friends did not wish to see him suffer reduced income. Whatever Baker's personal sentiments about the better off classes falling within the purview of the Poor Law he could not have been at all happy about the Guardians asking him to seek exemption for someone personally known to them. It goes wholly against the grain of Baker's personal attitudes. That is probably why he included reference to the fact that Mr Gibson was a friend of some of the Guardians, signalling to Chadwick that he disapproved. The response was satisfyingly brief and direct. It was from an assistant secretary, Mr Goode. "I am instructed to state that in the actual existing circumstances of this case the answer to the inquiry is in the negative."⁴¹⁸

Baker and the gentlemen of the Visiting Committee emerge from these minutes with credit. Stepney may not have any special policy for dealing with lunatics until 1845,

but their conduct implies that they dealt with the lunatics before them in broadly the same way as their other charges, as individuals for whom the Union felt a responsibility to administer the Poor Law in a fair and reasonable way. The Union set aside special facilities and employed a keeper to care for them whom they expected to behave well to her charges. Stepney Union Guardians behaved as Chadwick had wanted all unions to behave, ambitiously high minded, tough but humane.

Whitechapel Union. The new Whitechapel Union formed in 1837 comprised the parishes and liberties of St Mary Whitechapel, Norton Folgate (or Falgate), Old Artillery, Christ Church Spitalfields, Mile End New Town, St Botolph Aldgate, East Smithfield, St Katherine by the Tower, the Tower Liberties and Trinity Minories. Later described as a model union,⁴¹⁹ it is not hard to see why. The minute books, accounts and letter files are not only in exemplary order, following closely the prescribed form dictated by the Poor Law Commission but show a methodical, if not obsessional commitment to central guidance on classification, outdoor relief and sundry other directives. The Commission issued every new union with fifty-nine pages of specimen forms and ledgers that the new clerk John Smith pasted into a handy reference book.⁴²⁰ Expenditure on lunatic placements was to be separately documented in the account ledger. Unfortunately these have not survived although the minuted quarterly accounts have.

In the early days Whitechapel, like its neighbours, concentrated on establishing the machinery of corporate administration, agreeing procedures, appointing paid officers, setting up the working sub-committees such as the Visiting Committee, the Audit Committee and so on. They set about aggregating the constituent parish budgets in order to review the established pattern of poor relief allocation and began to assess the state of their several workhouses. The Poor Law Commission found the Charles Street workhouse in Spitalfields "in a ruinous state."⁴²¹ Whitechapel's vast workhouse, with 700 beds, overcrowded and dilapidated. There was also an old poorhouse in Aldgate with a further 114 places.⁴²²

The new Guardians took seriously the apparent prohibition in the Amendment Act on retaining "dangerous" lunatics and idiots in the workhouse although the wording implied no new responsibilities beyond established practice. In August 1837 the Board asked Mr Byles, the most senior of the parish medical officers "to arrange for all cases of idiot and lunatic paupers in the workhouse to be submitted for the joint opinion of the three medical officers to ascertain whether any such paupers be dangerous."⁴²³ The Clerk was requested to get quotes from local licensed houses for placing "dangerous lunatics." During the next week Samuel Byles^h and John Liddle together examined all the pauper lunatics known to them, identifying eight they believed to be "dangerous". The third medical officer Richard Lucy Reed sent his own separately assessed list of eight the following week. Only four of Reed's eight appeared on the Byles/Liddle list. The Guardians accepted all twelve should be removed to an asylum.⁴²⁴ The Union inherited a number of lunatics in the County Asylum at Hanwell, at Miles', at Byas' in Bow and at Bethnal Green.⁴²⁵ Whitechapel was the only East London union that made immediate changes to their lunatic placement policy as a result of the Amendment Act.

Quotes for weekly maintenance costs per pauper had arrived by the next meeting: Miles and Co,ⁱ 8s 9d per person per week, Warburton and Co,^j Bethnal Green, 9s 6d and Armstrong and Co, Peckham,^k 10s.⁴²⁶ The decision to use Miles' at Hoxton was perhaps predictable on cost grounds but it was also nearest. There was no request to send them to Hanwell, probably because it was generally full. These costly placements worried the Board. Byles was instructed to visit regularly to assess the progress of 'dangerousness' of the pauper lunatics in order to return them to the workhouse at the earliest opportunity.

The effect on Sam Byles of his regular visits seems to have been an increasing interest in the insane. During 1837 and 38 Byles produced reports for the Board every 4 to 6 weeks on individuals at Miles, Warburton's, Hanwell and on the pauper idiots farmed

^h See Appendix C for biographies of **Samuel Byles** and **John Liddle**.

ⁱ For Miles and Co, Hoxton House Asylum, see chapter 3

^j For Warburton and Co, Bethnal Green Asylums, see chapter 3.

^k Armstrong's at Peckham was the 3rd large private asylum in London that took pauper lunatics. Originally owned by Peter Armstrong and Charles Mott, see chapter 3

out at Byas'.⁴²⁷ ¹ He resisted the Board's calls for rapid removal back to the workhouse on cessation of 'danger' if he considered the paupers were better off where they were, recruiting Liddle and Reed to a joint report when his own opinion might not have been sufficient to convince the Board.⁴²⁸ They submitted a joint report, for example, in December 1837 recommending that 11 of 19 paupers placed in private asylums should remain where they were. There had been an opinion expressed (by whom is not clear) that James Darkin at Byas' was fit to return to the workhouse. The medical officers were adamant that he was "by no means a fit inmate as the workhouse is presently constituted. He and some others of the foregoing list might be here"^m if there were wards and nurses devoted exclusively to them but such an arrangement we should by no means recommend under the present unhealthy crowded condition of the two workhouses"⁴²⁹. Byles presented the report in person. The Board agreed to leave Darkin where he was. At the same meeting Byles reported that he had found a situation for a young woman Margaret Donovan, a convalescent patient at the White House, Bethnal Green, in service with the Matron of Bancroft's Schoolⁿ conditional on the Board finding funds for clothing. The Board agreed.⁴³⁰

The Board's concern about the costs of lunatic placements is hardly surprising. Michaelmas Quarter expenditure in 1837⁴³¹ listed 1159 recipients of indoor relief in the House of £1292, 17s 6d, a weekly cost of 1s 8d per person. In the same quarter, a total of £241 had been spent on out-placements for 40 or so lunatics and idiots, an average cost per asylum placement for the quarter of 18s. At a unit cost of 8-9s per week, this suggests that placements were usually brief, perhaps for only 2-3 weeks. Every week in the asylum cost the union five times as much as the workhouse.

By the end of 1837 the Guardians were beginning to use Hanwell more; of the total expenditure on lunatics, £115 9s 3d, that is nearly 50%, was spent at Hanwell. Byles became increasingly enthusiastic about Hanwell. At the meeting where they

¹ For Edward Byas' pauper farm at Grove Hall Bow, see chapter 3

^m The Guardians held their meetings at one of the workhouses although their offices were in Leman Street.

ⁿ Bancroft's School, Mile End was funded by the Drapers' Company (by the endowment of Alderman Bancroft) in the Eighteenth Century. It provided education for local boys.

considered their hefty expenditure on lunatics, Byles made a request to send a further three paupers there. On this occasion the Guardians balked at yet more expense and postponed the decision for a fortnight. Undaunted, Byles pressed them again at the next meeting when they reluctantly agreed.⁴³² Byles quickly learnt to use the magic word 'dangerous' to persuade the Guardians to buy the care he wanted. The spectre of 'dangerousness' influenced most decisions on lunatic care in Whitechapel.

The Whitechapel Guardians relied in the early days on the opinions of workhouse staff and medical officers, who had motives of self-interest in removing lunatics to other people's care beyond any humanitarian concerns they may have had. Their removal meant less work. The Guardians also relied on the employed officers, especially the Clerk, to interpret the Poor Law Commission's complex rules and instructions. The funding regulations were particularly labyrinthine. The old parish Trustees for example had been able to 'top up' from the poor budget private family resources to fund the care of an insane parishioner at St Luke's Hospital or a private licensed house. But when Richard Burgess, a street keeper employed for a guinea a week by the Roadside Pavement Commissioners, applied "for help to pay for wife's maintenance in a lunatic asylum" the Board replied that "it appears doubtful whether, as he is not a pauper, it is lawful."⁴³³ Most East London unions continued to place non-paupers in asylums and actively chased the relatives for a contribution to the patient's upkeep. The difference in this case was that the initiative came from the relative and not from the union.

Whitechapel guardians do not seem to have had much interest in their pauper children. They voted against appointing a schoolteacher for the workhouse even though Kay bombarded them through repeated visits and exhortatory letters to build a separate institution.⁴³⁴ He compared them unfavourably with Stepney Union who were "proceeding with great zeal and success" to establish a separate children's home. Another two years passed before Whitechapel decided to renovate an old building on the west side of the workhouse for pauper children.⁴³⁵ At the same time they identified a ward with access to fenced-off airing grounds for the lunatics.

The typhus epidemic in the winter of 1837-8 preoccupied every institution in the East End.⁴³⁶ Whitechapel's Relieving Officer died, "having caught the typhus in the discharge of his duties."⁴³⁷ He was replaced by Thomas Almond, who had barely started work before he succumbed to the same disease, in May 1838. The apparently hazardous nature of the post did not deter his son Thomas Almond Junior, age 22, from applying, even though he was himself too ill to assume his duties when first appointed.

Quite soon the Guardians must have wondered whether Almond's appointment was a wise one. Almond assiduously implemented the Whitechapel policy of drab penny-pinching. His zealousness in protecting the poor budget led frequently to complaints of heartless neglect of the destitute.⁴³⁸ One of his favourite methods for dealing with out-of-hours requests for admission from people of dubious settlement entitlement was to suggest the petitioner should try a neighbouring parish first. He directed them late at night over the border to Stepney, Bethnal Green or St Luke's Old Street, where he guessed presumably that other relieving officers would take them in. Predictably the other relieving officers quickly cottoned on to this scam and started to make complaints, first direct to the Whitechapel Guardians who were inclined in the first instance to defend Almond, and later direct to the Poor Law Commission, who took a close interest in unions' responses to complaints.⁴³⁹

After one particularly heartless incident, Almond was censured by the Board but not sacked, even though Chadwick had written an incensed letter of complaint to the Board saying Almond should have been dismissed earlier.⁴⁴⁰ It is clear that the Guardians sympathised with Almond's intentions while recognising that his over-zealousness often went too far. Almond proved incapable of doing better. Four months later, the Commission sent a further complaint, this time from relatives of Mary Bane, a local woman who had died in a state of great neglect after Almond had repeatedly refused her family's requests for assistance.⁴⁴¹ The evidence of Almond's callousness was plain even to the Guardians. This time he was sacked.⁴⁴²

Almond was frequently at loggerheads with the medical officers for failing to provide the additions to diet that they ordered for sick parishioners on the ticket system. The prescription of beef tea was popular with Byles and his colleagues; the relieving officer resented the expense.⁴⁴³ Almond's replacement Peter Atrell fell out with Sam Byles over the same issue within a week or two of his appointment. Made in the same mould as Almond, Atrell was exceptionally tight with his limited budget. Frequent bickering between Byles and Atrell began in late 1840 and continued though to 1844. Atrell complained that Byles habitually issued a ticket for improving the diet of sick paupers without seeing them first, on the hearsay of relatives; Byles criticised Atrell's reluctance to follow medical advice.

Neither Byles nor Liddle was faultless in the discharge of his duties. Their differing responses to complaints about them reveal Byles' complex personality and the Guardians' ambivalence to him and the more straightforward qualities of Liddle. In late April 1839 John Ryan of Wood Street Spitalfields complained to the Guardians that he had asked Sam Byles to visit William Edgehill, a sick pauper. Byles had promised to come but had not turned up.⁴⁴⁴ The Board at first resolved to ask Byles "to be more attentive to his duties" but several Guardians dissented and demanded that the matter be further investigated. This was not the first complaint about Byles.⁴⁴⁵ A committee of five Guardians set about making more detailed inquiries. Byles lied when he was interviewed.⁴⁴⁶ First he blustered that he had tried to visit but "mistook the number of the house", then when that was challenged he claimed there had been an inkblot over the number of the house on the request note so he could not visit. His apprentice, not being privy to Byles' inventions, admitted that Byles had not attempted to visit. Clearly enraged by Byles' lies, the committee turned up every stone in the parish to look for other evidence of Byles' neglecting his work. They rushed straight through the workhouse wards inspecting the sick under his care and asking awkward questions. They found several very sick people left to the care of the apprentice, some in poor condition. From there they proceeded out to Whitechapel and visited two patients at home chosen at random from several visited recently by Byles. Fortunately they found that Byles and his assistant Gibson had indeed visited and all was going well. But Byles was in deep trouble. His problems were compounded the same week

by a letter to the Board from Assistant Commissioner Dr Kay, who had the irritating habit of making his own personal snap judgements on the medical care of patients in the institutions he visited. On one of his regular tours of inspection, Kay had spotted a pauper James Louis Roussiliac in the Spitalfields workhouse who "was considered a dangerous lunatic" and advised the Board "to make special enquiry into the case by the medical officer."⁴⁴⁷ Byles knew this patient well and was well able to defend his reasons for not removing him to an asylum. Roussileac's "derang'd state was dependent on fever and as he regained his bodily health the tone of his mind would be restored; to a certain extent this is the case and if he has friends to take care of him I think he ought safely to be discharged."⁴⁴⁸

The Board met to consider Byles' fate.⁴⁴⁹ Five voted for his dismissal, ten for "severest censure and disapprobation" short of dismissal. They accepted Byles' explanations of why a "dangerous lunatic" was left in the workhouse. Having won his reprieve, Byles pressed on with extraordinary aplomb for an increase in his salary of £5 per year (to £155) for regularly visiting lunatics, as recommended by the Commission—and got it! Sam Byles must have been unusually charming, wily or eloquent; to go into a board meeting with a good chance of being sacked and come out with a pay rise is impressive. Clearly he was a man who generated a good deal of both antipathy and support. The Guardians commonly voted on resolutions arising out of his demands whereas there was little dispute over Liddle's requests. Byles seems to have been more interested in his work with lunatics than his other work.

John Liddle was a more straightforward character. He took an interest in sanitary matters, frequently complaining to the Board of "nuisances". "An offensive nuisance in Beaumont Buildings, Rosemary Lane which is likely to prove very detrimental to the health of the neighbourhood" was typical of many.⁴⁵⁰ Like the other two medical officers Liddle covered a district patch. In late 1843, there was a complaint that Liddle had failed to visit a sick child at home, asking the mother to bring the child to his house to be seen instead. The child was brought several times to see him but died.⁴⁵¹

The Board "resolved that Mr Liddle has grossly neglected his duty in not assisting the child at the time the order was delivered to him and also acted improperly in ordering the child to be brought to his house after finding it to be in so dangerous a state." Liddle blurted out angrily that the Board was unjust, resigned on the spot and withdrew from the meeting. Adopting a measured tone, the Guardians wrote to him saying he must put his resignation in writing but they expected him to continue working until they had found a replacement. Privately they noted down the name of an associate of Byles, Benedict Hart, who they could call on if Liddle let them down.

Liddle's wrote swiftly a letter "of extreme regret that in the excitement of the moment I applied the term unjust to your resolution." He had mistook the seriousness of the case and apologised for his errors. His honest acknowledgement ^{of} fault saved his job and he was re-appointed the following week,⁴⁵² the Board resolving to strike out the word "gross" applying to his neglect "and will be considered as never introduced".^o

Over the period from 1837 to the mid-40s, the three medical officers developed their special interests. Richard Lucy Reed took an interest in the pauper children. He died in 1842 and was replaced by his junior associate John Forster. John Liddle took the public health brief,^p drawing attention to endless nuisances of sewers, noxious smells, fires and poisonous manufactories. Sam Byles was the lunatic specialist; his name appears on all the Whitechapel lunatic detention orders for the period.⁴⁵³ All three however maintained a huge responsibility for providing a general medical service for the area. The Poor Law Commission regarded a catchment population of 15,000 per medical officer as the maximum, in Whitechapel the three patches were 20, 26 and 25,000 in addition to onerous responsibilities in the workhouses. The officers complained but nothing was done.⁴⁵⁴

The tensions between the Guardians and the medical officers about the costs of lunatic placements and the desirability of moving paupers to asylums sometimes boiled over

^o The minutes were never altered to conform to this resolution.

^p **Liddle** became the first Whitechapel Medical Officer of Health, see notes, Appendix C

into frank arguments. As Byles got more convinced of the virtues of Hanwell, the private asylums became less attractive. Liddle too was dissatisfied, both with the care of the idiots placed at Edward Byas' in Bow, "The house was not clean or orderly"⁴⁵⁵ and with conditions at Miles' in Hoxton, which was "badly ventilated and in a very offensive state". The minutes do not say so but it seems possible that Byles had recruited Liddle to add his 'sanitary' observations to Byles' opinion on conditions at the institutions normally on Byles' visiting list.

Three Guardians, Bratt, Craven and Hemms, who might be described as the hawks of the board, least agreeable to expenditure beyond the bare essentials, decided to visit Miles' to see for themselves.⁴⁵⁶ Sarah Elkins "was in bed with a strait waistcoat" but the room was "clean and well ventilated." They found Pettigrew "at the wash tub" and another pauper "in good health and tolerably clean." Nothing much seemed to be wrong from their point of view, "we found every department in a proper and cleanly state". Byles' plan to move the insane paupers from Miles' to Hanwell was thwarted.

Byles preferred Hanwell to Miles' but thought Miles' a better place for lunatics than the workhouse. Anxious to move Sarah Tunningley out of the union house to Miles', Byles took an order for her removal for approval to the Lambeth Street Court.⁴⁵⁷ The magistrate Hardwick refused the application on the grounds that "she had long and harmless residence in Whitechapel Workhouse". A few weeks later Byles tried again, this time successfully.⁴⁵⁸

The Whitechapel Guardians eventually began to challenge the medical officers' requests for transfer to an asylum. They apparently got more confidence in their own judgement about the dangerousness of an insane pauper. They turned down all three medical officers' requests to send Ann and Margaret Carter to an asylum in late '39 on the grounds that they were not dangerous.⁴⁵⁹ The doctors orchestrated three simultaneous letters of objection to the decision but cleverly acknowledged that by the time the Guardians had seen the women they were not as dangerous as when they made the request for removal.

Reed: I have visited and examined Ann Carter several times since last week and although I am still of the opinion that she ought to have been removed at the time of my signing the certificate yet at the present time she can stay in the workhouse.

Byles: There is nothing in her present condition to render removal necessary. At the same time I feel bound to add that I still consider her of unsound mind and very easily excited. Under the slightest cause of irritation I should not be surprised at the recurrence of violent symptoms.

Liddle's missive was word for word almost the same as Byles'. The medical officers' aim was to send to an asylum, particularly to Hanwell, those lunatics that they believed were suitable for treatment. Danger was the justification. They were reluctant to send away insane paupers merely for the relief or convenience of workhouse staff. Jane Davey, for example was proving to be a difficult handful for the workhouse and the Master wanted her removed to an asylum.⁴⁶⁰ Byles did not think she was suitable. The matter rumbled on for a week or two; he was asked to reconsider. Byles recruited Forster to a joint report to the Board. Davey was "an imbecile who needs gentleness and firmness; she is free of any delusions amounting to actual insanity," "Any coercion or physical restraint should be avoided. While no means a desirable inmate I think if sent to Hanwell she would soon be returned." They recommended placing her in a small ward and to advise other paupers in the ward to avoid "irritating" her. It seems that Byles was looking to send to Hanwell lunatics with full-blown insanity for a particular regime of treatment.

Jane Davey did not meet the criteria, but an increasing number of Whitechapel paupers did. The Ladyday quarter expenditure for 1841⁴⁶¹ lists a total indoor relief bill of £2,193 on 1,723 paupers in the workhouse, a total outdoor relief bill of £1,659 on 4,513 paupers of which just over £329 (approximately 20% of the total outdoor budget), was spent on placements at Hanwell. During 1841, lunatic placement costs soared. In the last quarter of '41, the total outdoor relief expenditure remained broadly the same at £1,650 but £530, nearly a third was spent on lunatics, mostly at Hanwell with a few placements elsewhere. It may well have been this rising expense that decided the Guardians to take a more actively challenging stance to medical recommendations.

The paupers themselves did not share Byles' enthusiasm for asylums. The threat of being sent to one was enough to quieten down an excitable inmate. One or other of the medical officers assessed eleven paupers in November 1845 for possible transfer to an asylum. None were recommended. "It would seem that in every case the threat of removal to an asylum as well as close observation and slight restraint has acted beneficially upon the minds of these individuals and we do not consider the removal of either of them (sic) at present necessary."⁴⁶² Quite what the 'slight restraint' comprised is not spelt out.

The Poor Law Commission sent a note to unions in 1844 "of the necessity which exists of sending to an asylum all paupers of unsound mind whose state may be likely to be benefited by such removal or who are dangerous to themselves or others."⁴⁶³ This was the first time that the Commission had explicitly stated that an asylum should treat, not simply contain, dangerousness. This could not have been welcome news to the Whitechapel Guardians who continued to fret over the costs and repeatedly called for reports to justify medical officers' requests. The hawkish Charles Bratt was convinced by early 1845 that the Union should stop using private asylums and send all lunatic paupers to Hanwell, apparently on cost grounds.⁴⁶⁴ The Union was still using a number of private placements: twenty at Hoxton House, two at Grove Hall and thirteen at Peckham. All these cost 11s per week whereas Hanwell was then considerably cheaper at 8s 9d. The principle was accepted but could not be put into practice because Hanwell was usually full.

The question of whether physical restraints were being used in the workhouse was raised by a query from the Poor Law Commission. The Guardians asked for a report on the proper application of irons and other restraints in the workhouse. The medical officers' response was minuted on 3 March 1846.⁴⁶⁵

We feel some difficulty in drawing up a report respecting the application of irons or other restraints because we find that in those asylums where their use is abandoned, the comfort and happiness of the inmates is obviously increased and the most violent lunatics are controlled and kept in safety merely by the careful supervision of humane and experienced Keepers, and by occasional seclusion in properly constructed rooms.

We are confident however that in the absence of all such qualified attendants in our workhouse, circumstances have arisen and will arise imperatively calling for the use of restraint, not only to secure the safety of patients but to protect other inmates.

In a majority of such cases, if not in all, we think that the padded dress sometimes since described to the Board will be preferable to the use of hand cuffs, cords or leg-irons.

We also consider that as a general rule no patient should be placed under restraint without the previous order of one of the Medical Officers, and that if under any sudden emergency the Master or Matron should be compelled to direct restraint, the sanction of the Medical Officer to its continuance should be immediately afterwards obtained.

The Board recognised that the issue was important and tabled it as an agenda item for the next meeting. Byles' numerous visits to Hanwell must have convinced him Conolly's approach was right. Liddle was the kind of man to back him. Byles and Liddle won for their profession the right to control the degree to which pauper lunatics were restrained in Whitechapel Union houses, a modest *coup* perhaps, but considering that neither had exhibited faultless judgement in the past and the Guardians generally questioned their decisions about most things, the Board's resolution is a landmark in medical influence in the Union.

It was resolved: that as a general rule no patient be placed under restraint without the previous order of one of the Medical Officers and that if any sudden emergency the Master or the Matron should be compelled to direct restraint, the sanction of the Medical Officer to its continuance should be immediately afterwards obtained.⁴⁶⁶

The Whitechapel parish medical officers exerted considerable influence on union policy on the care of lunatics, working largely through conviction, personal influence and persuasion of the Guardians. In some East End unions the medical men are almost invisible, shadowy employees who rarely figure in the minuted work of the Board of Guardians. In Whitechapel the doctors were important players in the poor law system. The embryo that would become, one hundred and fifty years later, the 'catchment area community psychiatrist' is just detectable in Sam Byles, a man who preferred working with lunatics to other types of pauper patient. John Liddle, whose passion for collecting facts and figures led naturally to an interest in public health matters, was

later appointed Whitechapel's first Medical Officer of Health.⁹ Byles and his colleagues all carried huge responsibilities of a general kind and yet they were beginning to specialise in the bits of the job they felt drawn to, or like Daniel Ross in Stepney, were obliged to concentrate on by the nature of their institutional attachment.

Hackney and Stoke Newington Union. The new Board of Guardians of the 1837 union of Hackney with its prosperous little village neighbour of Stoke Newington was very nearly the unstructured Hackney Trustees of the Poor. Stoke Newington was a settled middle-class village that made little use of poor relief or the workhouse. They contributed two Guardians to the Board and 10% of the union budget but generally used only about 5% of the poor budget, in later years a source of some resentment with Stoke Newington ratepayers.⁴⁶⁷

The inefficient busy-bodies of the Trustees transmogrified into inefficient and peculiarly lackadaisical Guardians. A casual reading of the minutes would suggest that the main purpose of the union was to run a stone-breaking business for the Highways Board.^{468 469} The Guardians met every week and quickly got through the matter of poor relief. Individual cases were mentioned but rarely warranted a detailed minute. The Clerk's English was convoluted to the point of incomprehensibility at times. Here is one typical entry following an entirely unrelated item:

Ordered: that the relieving officer do acquit himself thereof by changing the same in his out-relief lists of the several parishes to the account of the several pauper lunatics.⁴⁷⁰

⁹ Liddle spoke about Whitechapel to the **Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts** (First Report of the Commission PP 1844 (572) XVII Q 5669-81). He submitted a chart classifying the 2303 deaths in 1838 by age group and occupation and followed that with a description of overcrowding in the area, on average 5 people lived in each room, which on average measured 12 feet by 8 feet by 8 feet and rented for between one shilling and sixpence and two shillings per week.

^r Launched in the early 1830's, or possibly even earlier, the stone-yard took up increasing amounts of Guardians' time. In 1838 at least half of every meeting was dedicated to it. Although pauper manufactories rarely were, stone-breaking could be profitable during a period of major road construction. The quality of the Guernsey blue granite, tenders for the supply, correspondence with traders in Guernsey, Isle of Wight, Camden Town and Pimlico, the sale to the Highways Board for the boom in road building; all this was the stuff of Hackney minutes.

Ordered: to John Tudor, insane and Mr Tensh and Mr Doysett (Relieving Officer) to get him into County Lunatic Asylum his friends undertaking to repay his expenses.⁴⁷¹

This latter was irregular as well as ungrammatical. Hanwell had a policy of admitting only pauper lunatics who had no family support, but many East London unions sought reimbursement of charges from relatives whenever they could. Frederick Tensh, the parish medical officer, secured Tudor's admission to Hanwell a few weeks later.⁴⁷²

Lunatics cropped up in the meetings from time to time and there is a reference in 1838 that the Board "ordered that the Relieving Officer procure the admission into the County Lunatic Asylum of the several pauper lunatics of the Union."⁴⁷³ Until 1840 this was the only recorded decision on the purchase of care for this group.

The parish medical officers are mentioned only occasionally and they seem to have attended Guardians' meetings only rarely. When they did, they attended together.

Mr Hovell, Mr Tensh, Mr Robinson and Mr Sheffield, the medical officers, severally attended and reported on Ann Gardiner a lunatic. Ordered 6 shillings to father for two days loss of time and travel expenses in respect of giving evidence on her settlement.⁴⁷⁴

Hackney was generously provided with medical personnel compared with the poorer eastern unions. Thomas Hovell looked after the 400 workhouse inmates (377 from Hackney, 23 from Stoke Newington); the other three served the district. It is difficult to know whether the doctors' invisibility is the result of the Clerk's poor grasp of minute taking or to their lack of involvement in parish business compared for example with the Stepney and Whitechapel medical officers. There are entries where the individual doctor is not identified by name.

Elizabeth Pugh an inmate casual she applied to discharge herself. The medical attendant reported that she was unfit to be trusted out and that he would certify as to her insanity. Ordered that he do so and the Relieving Officer to procure her admission into County Lunatic Asylum as a County Patient.⁴⁷⁵

This was the second admission to Hanwell in 1839 that the Guardians had been able to avoid paying for by off-loading the costs on to the County budget. Hackney and Stoke

Newington Union do not seem to have been so strapped for cash as their poorer neighbours. Their deliberations over the proposed new workhouse buildings, which was to have specially designed sick wards, makes clear that they had the cash but only needed the official sanction to proceed with their plans.⁴⁷⁶

Other unions' preoccupation with the classification problem, ensuring they adhered to Poor Law Commission instructions and guidance, 'bench-marking' costs against other unions, monitoring expenses and formulating policy on the sick, especially in relation to epidemic fever, all this more or less passed by the Hackney gentlemen unremarked. While Mr Commissioner Mott and Doctor Kay, the consecutive Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, were regularly popping up at eastern union board meetings and frequently sent criticisms and suggestions, central bureaucracy seems to have let Hackney and Stoke Newington plod on in its customary bumbling fashion without much interference.

Bethnal Green. The single large parish of St Matthew Bethnal Green established its own Board of Guardians in early 1837. From the outset the Guardians were committed to full implementation of the Amendment Act. Their minutes, written in the Clerk's round, childlike hand, while not indexed, are studded with bold topic headings that make for easy reading. The Board met for the first time on 10 April 1837 at 2.00pm under the chairmanship of Mr William Howard JP with Mr Commissioner Charles Mott in attendance from Somerset House, who intermittently interjected advice and comment.⁴⁷⁷ Somewhat unwisely perhaps, the Guardians decided to review all one hundred cases of outdoor relief and hear petitions pending from workhouse inmates right there and then, with the consequence the meeting finished at quarter to ten that evening. Mott had the sense to excuse himself half way through.

There were 722 paupers in institutions or directly supervised by the Board: 667 in the workhouse, 13 insane, 32 children "at nurse" and 10 "refractory" at Old Ford (that is Byas' pauper farm at Bow). Of the 13 insane, some were at Hanwell at a quarterly cost of £30 7s 6d, the rest were in the insane ward in the workhouse. Mott did not

approve of the old vestry policy of paying paupers as attendants and nurses in the sick and insane wards on the grounds that it encouraged those who were being paid to remain in the workhouse when they should be seeking employment outside.⁴⁷⁸ The Board managed to avoid taking any decision on this at the first meeting. When the matter came up again two months later the Guardians niftily side-stepped Mott's guidance⁴⁷⁹ by pronouncing that the current incumbents "should cease to be considered paupers and have the following weekly allowances—to men and women 2s per week and to their assistants 1/6d per week." And since these new employees required somewhere to live, they would be provided with food, clothing and lodging in the workhouse; an admirable piece of footwork by the Guardians.

Mott had commented adversely on the poor physical condition and ragged clothing of the workhouse paupers who appeared before the Board at the first meeting and suggested the Board adopt a uniform workhouse dress.⁴⁸⁰ He visited Bethnal Green Workhouse later the same week and at the following meeting expressed his dismay at the mess and filth.⁴⁸¹ "I found it in anything but a creditable state." The inmates were dirty and ragged, the house crowded but "existing accommodation is not properly appropriated." "The wards are filled with all kinds of rubbish" and "Paupers are allowed to retain broken pots, pans, china, rags and useless clothes...all assisting to encourage vermin and filth."⁴⁸² The Board set about the tasks of classification and cleaning up the workhouse in a sound methodical way.

Frederick Ager, the parish Medical Officer who provided a service to the workhouse inmates, is mentioned rarely. He defended the choice of workhouse dietary in 1842 when some parishioners protested to the Poor Law Commission about the lack of bread in the workhouse dietary, fixed at ten ounces maximum per day.⁴⁸³ Ager and the Board had chosen one of six possible dietaries that had been recommended by the Commission. Their choice, reasonably enough the one with maximum meat and rather less bread, was made by Ager on the basis of nutrition rather than on cost. The Guardians agreed a compromise diet with the complainants. Apart from this, Mr Ager and his fellow medical officers remain shadowy figures.

Between 1839 and 1842 the Guardians increased the proportion of pauper lunatics sent to Hanwell, although they continued to place a handful of paupers at Bethnal Green Asylum (Warburton's), known locally as 'the Asylum on the Green', which was right in the middle of their patch. It is possible that when the new workhouse opened in Bonner's Hall Field in 1842 the Guardians decided to send the out-posted lunatics from Warburton's not to the new workhouse but to Hanwell but there is no explicit reference to this. Throughout 1842, the weekly returns to the Poor Law Commission mention 42 to 44 paupers in insane asylums.⁴⁸⁴

The following year the Clerk reported that he had visited Hanwell in the company of the Chairman, Vice-chairman and Mr Christey, the assistant overseer, for the purpose of making the annual return demanded of the new Act of Parliament.⁴⁸⁵ "The whole 47 had been seen, identified and investigated with a view to ascertaining whether any were in a fit state to be removed...After conferring with the two medical gentlemen resident none appeared in a proper state for that purpose." The minute ends, "The latter observations are alike applicable to the Insane Poor at Messrs Warburton and Co's Asylum on the Green."

The Guardians were satisfied they were treating their lunatics well. When the Poor Law Commission sent a circular letter to Guardians asking for "suggestions on the care of the malady (ie insanity) in its incipient state," the Clerk was instructed to send the Guardians recommendations, which he noted "scrupulously followed out in the treatment of these poor people were in constant habit of receiving."⁴⁸⁶ The minutes do not record what the treatment comprised.

The patronising, pernickety style of central management adopted by the officers of the Poor Law Commission produced outbursts of irritation in most of the Boards of Guardians from time to time. Chadwick, Kay and Mott adopted a lofty, pompous tone, quoting minor rules and obscure points of order while at the same time managing to be singularly unhelpful in responding to clerks' practical problems.⁴⁸⁷

Mr Bestow, for example, one of the two Bethnal Green Relieving Officers^s was on the receiving end one evening of one of Thomas Almond's attempts to shift casual paupers over the border from Whitechapel.⁴⁸⁸ Eliza Knight and her family had been hassled out of Whitechapel into Bethnal Green, where Bestow felt obliged to take them in. Since this was not the first time Almond had done this and Bethnal Green Clerk had already complained to Whitechapel Guardians without satisfaction, on this occasion the Clerk decided to make a formal complaint to the Poor Law Commission.⁴⁸⁹ Assistant Commissioner Kay summoned Bestow and Almond to Somerset House, believed Bestow's story and censured Almond, to Bethnal Green's legitimate satisfaction. There followed a lengthy correspondence between the Bethnal Green Guardians and the Commission on whether the Commission could assist the Guardians to claim re-imbursement from Whitechapel for the considerable costs of dealing with Eliza Knight and her family. The Commission were extraordinarily unhelpful, fobbing off Bethnal Green with a number of implausible reasons why they should not get involved and finally refusing point blank to assist with negotiations. Bethnal Green got stuck with the bill.⁴⁹⁰

The Commission's style discouraged the Guardians from consulting them and must have led to some resentment of the Commission's attempts to enforce regulations. Bethnal Green tried hard to keep the Commission at arm's length, going slow on any major decisions until threatened with whatever sanction the Commission had to hand. The Commission may have had good reason to be wary of Bethnal Green's probity in matters of corporate governance. Throughout the years 1837 to 39 the Commission tried to get the Guardians to build a new workhouse.⁴⁹¹ In 1838 the Guardians made a strange deal with the Eastern Counties Railway Company. The Railway wanted to build a viaduct over the land on which part of the workhouse was built. They offered to pay the costs of moving paupers to other institutions and also to finance the extra costs of maintaining the insane at Warburton's and other paupers at Byas' at Bow.⁴⁹² This was a lucrative deal for Bethnal Green and a considerable disincentive to investing in a new workhouse. The Commission disapproved of this *ad hoc*

^s In Bethnal Green the Relieving Officers were often called by their former parish title of Assistant Overseer.

arrangement. After failing to persuade the Guardians to plan a new workhouse building, the Commission threatened that either the Guardians made such plans or the parish would be forcibly united with another local union to ensure that there was an organisation that would.⁴⁹³ Bethnal Green had "the most inconvenient, crowded and in all respects the worst premises now occupied by any Board of Guardians."⁴⁹⁴ Faced with this threat the Board reluctantly set about finding a site for their new workhouse.^t

The heavy cost of lunatic placements was as unwelcome in Bethnal Green as elsewhere. In 1838 the Board received the news that one of their paupers Mrs Sarah Clarke was being confined at Hoxton House as a "criminal lunatic". She had been transferred from Newgate after trial for the murder of her young daughter in January 1836 and "had ever since been chargeable to the parish at a cost of 10s per week including all expenses as such criminal lunatic."⁴⁹⁵ Sarah Clarke was not popular in Bethnal Green. A single mother in receipt of regular relief, she had neglected and ill-treated her child. When the child died and she was charged with murder, the Guardians declined to plead for clemency against the death sentence when requested to do so by her advocate. It seems that the news of her transfer from Newgate to Hoxton House came as an unwelcome surprise to the Guardians.

The Guardians could scarcely believe that they were faced with a whacking bill from Hoxton House but that the expense was "apparently permanent". They questioned "the Secretary of State having any power to exercise the Right in question" [the right to impose a cost of this kind on an unwilling parish]. "The Clerk begged to express a contrary opinion and that state criminal lunatics thus transferred to Hoxton from Newgate were under a special provision in an act of parliament which statute was ordered to be laid before the Board next Monday"⁴⁹⁶ The Clerk was right. 9 Geo IV c40 sections 53, 54 and 55 made it clear to the Board that the Secretary of State's

^t The case of the Railway and Bethnal Green Guardians might bear further investigation. The railway was built not only across the middle of the workhouse but also directly through the back garden of one of the Guardians, Nathaniel Hardingham in Paradise Row. (It is still in this location). Land for building railways was subject to compulsory purchase orders, which in some cases were generously funded by the railway speculators. Were there good reasons for some of the Guardians to want this particular route?

"power had been legally and properly exercised".⁴⁹⁷ Defeated, the Guardians decided to see if the Secretary of State would be willing to transfer Mrs Clarke from Hoxton to Hanwell to lessen the cost by about 3s per week.⁴⁹⁸ The minutes are silent about Mrs Clarke until a year later, when "the Home Secretary the Marquess of Normandy has arranged the removal of prisoner from Hoxton House to Bethlem".⁴⁹⁹ This letter "was read and highly approved of". The implication was that the cost would not be born by Bethnal Green.

Considerable energy was expended in devising ways of shifting or reducing the costs of lunatic placements in Bethnal Green, if possible money was extracted from relatives. "Joseph Mann, Insane: Mr William Young of 76 Church Street came before the Board to advocate of Mr Mann late of Pollard Row, chairmaker who was now in a state of insanity and about to be removed to Messrs Warburton".⁵⁰⁰ Mann had a weekly pension of 10s per week from the East India Company to which the Guardians had a legal claim to pay Mann's asylum costs.

Mr Young wished a certain portion to be applied for the benefit of the wife but in as much as she did now apply for relief and as her husband was not at present removed to Hanwell Asylum the Board suggested the matter had better remain as it did but when the removal to Hanwell had finally been completed Mr Young if he thought fit to renew his application, to which Mr Young acceded and thus the matter terminated.

Mann finally got his place in Hanwell some two months later, reducing the cost burden on the parish. Mr Young, accompanied by Mann's son, renewed his application on behalf of Mann's wife. The Guardians agreed that the pension would be used to pay Warburton's outstanding bill of £1 17s 6d and that the sum of 5s 6d a week would be paid from the pension towards the cost of Hanwell. Mann's wife could keep the 4s 6d remainder "to which son and Mr Young assented". When Sally Bartlett died in the Asylum on the Green in 1839, the Guardians placed a charge over her £30 residual estate held in the local savings bank in order to cover Warburton's bill of £14 15s 0d. The remainder was handed over to her son-in-law.⁵⁰¹ The active pursuit of relatives was not always successful. They tried and failed to extract the cost of maintaining Sarah Charles at Hanwell from either her father or her husband.⁵⁰²

The Guardians could be quite ruthless in their dealings with other Boards of Guardians. The parish maintained Jonathan Dobbs at the White House Bethnal Green but he had a settlement and a home and family, in Southampton, a fact acknowledged by Southampton Union. Worried that they wouldn't be able to extract the maintenance costs out of Southampton, Bethnal Green decided the sooner Dobbs was removed to his home town the better. They directed Christey the Relieving Officer "to go down with Jonathan Dobbs and leave him with his wife at Southampton". Mary-Ann Dobbs turned up a few days later and made the better suggestion that she should swear to her husband's settlement and get an order for his removal to Southampton Union. Meanwhile she would like her husband to remain in the asylum. The Board agreed and Mrs Dobbs departed to negotiate with her local Guardians. A fortnight later the Clerk reported that "Southampton Union would consent to allow him to remain at the White House on the Green paying the charge of 10/- a week and thus relieving us of every expense ab initio. The Board fully approved of the course that had been so satisfactorily taken to rid of this heavy encumbrance."⁵⁰³

Caroline Sabassa (or Sabasson, also called Garvan) wandered into the parish as a mentally deranged 'casual'.^u She was sent to Warburton's. The Clerk was inclined to get Phillips the surgeon at Warburton's to send her back to her previous lodgings with Mr Walker in Westminster. Since she was thought to be destitute the Guardians would get stuck with the bill if they left her in the asylum. "I have done all in my power to get rid of this poor woman", wrote James Phillips, " I sent her to Mr Walker's lodgings but it seemed he had given them up. I afterwards sent to an address where he was...but Mr Walker has no visible means of supporting her. I am reluctantly compelled to ask the Guardians to make her chargeable to the County as she has no settlement in England". The Board decided to try this route and also to shift Caroline to Hanwell as soon as there was a vacancy. About six weeks later the Clerk "finally got her made a County Patient at Worship St. thus getting rid of a vast

^u There is another account of this saga from Caroline Sabasson's friend, Mr Williams (not Walker as in Bethnal Green minutes) in correspondence between Hanwell and Williams in chapter 6, p192. Caroline Garvan also appeared as a casual seeking relief in Whitechapel Board minutes in June 1840.

difficulty and a permanent encumbrance on the parish".⁵⁰⁴ At the same meeting, it was noted with satisfaction that the removal had been arranged of another lunatic Elizabeth Griffen and her child, back to Milton parish in Northampton, her home parish agreeing to foot the outstanding bill of £20 owed to Hanwell.⁵⁰⁵

The minutes of Guardians' meetings are rarely other than bland. The emotional tone of the proceedings emerges only if the Clerk was skilled and Bethnal Green's clerk was not. One episode occasioned some wry amusement.

Clerk reported he had attended Worship Street on Friday and that after a very long and very peculiar examination of Charles Lloyd from Bethlem and another poor lunatic named William Power who had at first answered various questions most coherently and to the astonishment of the whole court! The magistrates ultimately agreed that the two might be transferred to Hanwell Asylum and warrants made out accordingly.⁵⁰⁶

This was of course another cost-reducing exercise.

Of all East London unions, Bethnal Green spent the least per head of population per annum on lunatics (see Economics section). In 1842 they spent at a rate of £13.5 per 1000 population, compared with £20 in Hackney and Stoke Newington Union for example and £34 in St George in the East. Bethnal Green achieved this distinction by extreme parsimony, scrutinising every lunatic placement with an eye to reducing costs. They used Hanwell as soon as it became the cheapest option. Bethnal Green managed their lunatic problem without much thought as to their overall objectives. Policy and ideology were not the Guardians' strong points. Single-minded dedication to cost containment was the main plank of Bethnal Green's strategy.

St George in the East The large parish of St George in the East (population 41,351 in 1841 census) straddled the Ratcliff Highway, immediately to the north of the inner Thames dockyards. The parish established its own Board of Guardians early, in 1836. The transition from old poor law parish vestry to new poor law Board of Guardians was achieved without much apparent change in either the culture or practice of poor relief.

Board minutes were extraordinarily brief; the weekly meetings at the office in Wellclose Square had puzzlingly short agendas for this profoundly pauperised parish. Whereas most East London Board minute books are 2 inch thick foolscap volumes, one year per volume or thereabouts, the smaller St George minutes cover the years 1836 to 1849 in three volumes.⁵⁰⁷ Sometimes the clerk Thomas Stone merely recorded the names of attendees, followed by a brief note of the weekly visit to the children at Tooting and perhaps one other item. The clerk's efforts to minimise his own scribbling went so far as not to copy letters into the letters book but simply to paste in the originals which at least avoided the careless transcription errors that crept occasionally into other clerks' copy letter books.⁵⁰⁸

St George Guardians were a benevolent, kindly lot and generous as far as lunatics are concerned; one might possibly judge them profligate. They declared the highest rate of institutionalised lunatics and idiots per population⁵⁰⁹ and spent more on their care, (£34 per 1000 population per annum) than any other East London Board, although the cost of each placement was about average at £17.6s 0d per head per annum.

St George was also a generous employer. Their clerk was paid £275 per annum compared with the East London norm of £200. Stepney paid £250 only because their clerk was legally qualified and the extra £50 covered the legal work carried out on behalf of the Union in addition to his clerical duties. St George also wanted to pay their three medical officers an above average all-in fee to cover midwifery and vaccination cases as well as parish work in the house and district, £140 to Mr Hopke and £100 to the others. The Commission forbade it and indeed insisted they reduce their remuneration of medical officers.⁵¹⁰ The doctors at first refused to reapply for their posts at the sanctioned reduced salary, so the Board placed an advertisement in *The Times* attracting at least one good applicant, which quickly induced the doctors to change their minds and accept the lower salary.⁵¹¹

There were two agenda items in the Board minutes between 1836 and 1839 concerned with lunatic placements. The first is a rare example of a Board employing an experienced lunatic keeper to care for someone in the workhouse. Jane Taylor,

"insane", the wife of James Taylor, was returned to the workhouse by Warburton's because she was in an advanced state of pregnancy and Warburtons felt unable to cope with her dual condition.⁵¹² The Guardians decided to employ someone look after her in the workhouse. The cost of this care is not recorded.

The second case was that of Mrs Anne Russell who had died in Hanwell, a lunatic funded by the parish for several years in various asylums at a total cost of £60. In 1839 her executors applied to the Board to have some of her residual estate, which was only just over the £60, reserved for her relatives, "being very poor".⁵¹³ In characteristically generous fashion the Board agreed to forego part of their charge over the legacy in order to support her relatives.

The St George Guardians took a much greater personal interest and gave more of their own time to parish work than seems to have been the case in neighbouring districts. Two of the Board visited Mr Drouet's establishment at Tooting every week to see the pauper children. Every few weeks they also visited the lunatics maintained at Warburton's, Byas's at Old Ford and at Mr Armstrong's Asylum at Peckham, used increasingly after 1843 when Hanwell and Warburtons were full, doing the round trip from the parish to the asylums all in the same day.

Perhaps it was this direct regular personal contact by the elected guardians with the paupers, in preference to delegating their responsibilities to their medical and relieving officers, that kept the Board's attention on human need rather than on the cost consequences of their decisions. Their kindly tone was set by an influential core group of guardians, probably the chairmen, Massingham, Gibson, Rayner and their close cronies. Their personal visits were probably a consequence rather than a cause of their benign approach to their duties. It was common practice for Boards to record formally every year their thanks for the services of the paid officers. Normally these are couched in terms of efficiency, industriousness, dedication to duty and so on. The St George Guardians always worded their appreciation in terms of the kindness of their employees.⁵¹⁴ They do not quibble about how much to spend on Christmas dinner for the children or the workhouse inmates. A choice of roast mutton or roast

beef, followed by plum pudding, washed down with a pint of porter for every inmate, in quantities that paupers outside the workhouse might well have envied, reflect the magnanimity of St George in the East Guardians.⁵¹⁵ Poplar would not even countenance plum pudding never mind beef.

The case of Elizabeth Lucretia Edwards, an infant who died in the parish on 27 October 1843 exemplifies the caring spirit with which the Board approached its responsibilities.⁵¹⁶ Her father complained to the Poor Law Commission in mid-November that the infant had died of starvation. After close enquiry, the Guardians wrote a full account of their officials' work from her birth to her death. The Edwards family had been receiving out-relief for some weeks following Edwards having been laid off work. The birth was uneventful but the new baby would not feed properly, appeared sickly and had several fits within the first 48 hours. The medical officer was summoned by the relieving officer, who had been visiting regularly in the days before and after the birth. They both then visited on alternate days, taking supplies of meat, bread and oatmeal to sustain the family over the next week. The infant never got a hold on life however and a week later died. The relieving officer offered to provide a parish funeral for the infant but neighbours and friends subscribed to provide a funeral. Edwards returned from seeking work in Birmingham to find the infant dead but the family still receiving poor relief. The Board concluded and the Commission agreed that everything possible had been done to sustain the family but the infant's starvation was an irremediable consequence of her inability to feed. The care provided to this family, if typical of the work of the relieving officer and parish doctor, suggest an impressive commitment to their duties.

By 1840 the poor relief budget was running at £11,400.⁵¹⁷ Hackney and Stoke Newington with a similar size population, spent £7,600 the same year.⁵¹⁸ St George was still spending as much in out-relief in money as in kind, £300 a quarter or so on both. The workhouse cost £1300 per quarter, the children at Tooting another £840, lunatic placements £250, (the Hackney equivalent was £200). Sundry other expenses are documented in figures casually rounded up to the nearest £10 pounds in a manner not seen in other board minutes and certainly not in the Commission prescribed style.

It is difficult to understand why the Guardians carried on spending in their benevolent fashion in a district where the demand on their budget must have been enormous and why the Commission did not intervene. The pauper examination books for parish settlements and casual relief describe a procession of people in desperate need, some at death's door by the time they sought help.^{519 520} The winter of 1837 to 38 was exceptionally bitter and most East London Boards noted the high demand consequent upon the inclement weather. In January 1838 there were no fewer than 155 casual applications in St George compared to 43 the previous year. All these cold, hungry people had to be squeezed into an already huge, overcrowded workhouse. The parish reputation for generosity might well have encouraged the cold destitute migrants to head for St George's in January 1838.

After 1844 the Board started to consider the rising costs of lunatic placements but they were still placing a high number of people in Hanwell. The County Asylum complained in 1846 that St George had over their quota already when they sought further admissions for the parish.⁵²¹ Earlier in 1846 Chairman Peter Rayner reported that he and the Vice-chairman had inspected Mr Aubin's Asylum for pauper lunatics at Camberwell, "which appeared to be well ordered and possessed of every proper arrangement."⁵²² The Guardians were stimulated by this reconnaissance visit to question the recent demand for an increased fee of 10 shillings per week per person at Byas', Warburton's and Armstrong's at Peckham. They were spending £52 per quarter at Warburton's and £53. 14s 0d a quarter at Peckham in 1846. They refused to pay the proposed new increased rate and on this occasion, perhaps because of the asylum proprietors' fear of competition from the new Camberwell Asylum, the Board managed to hold down prices. By 1849 however, the private asylums, in the face of increasing demand, took the market opportunity to hike up the price again, doing so in concert, good evidence that the institutions at Bow, Peckham and Bethnal Green were operating a price fixing cartel. Aubin at Camberwell seems not to have been in the same ring in 1846.

By 1845 Hanwell was usually full. It was also inconveniently sited. The Guardians fretted about whether they should visit personally but it was too far to include in the regular round trip to asylums.⁵²³ St George's subscribed to growing local opinion, initiated by Stepney, that a second county lunatic asylum for the eastern part of Middlesex should be supported.⁵²⁴ Hackney Union failed to recruit St George to their protest about the proposal to build a new Asylum for the Destitute.⁵²⁵ St George in the East was never backward in planning to spend rate payers' money.

There is a surprisingly untroubled aura to the Guardians' minutes in East London. In St George in the East, the most notorious criminal district in the country during the nineteenth century, signs of turbulence are few. Where are the violent drunks, the riotous behaviour, the uncontrollable East End loutishness and thuggery of early Victorian London? Where is Bill Sykes? Suicides were common enough in the Coroners' Court and there were a handful of suicides recorded in Hanwell County Lunatic Asylum for the period from 1837-45⁵²⁶ but murder and mayhem are generally missing from Board minutes. The Guardians were obliged to report to the Poor Law Commission workhouse offences for which paupers were arraigned before a magistrate and considered 'serious' incidents involving troublesome individuals at their meetings. By far the most common offences were repeated absconding from the workhouse and drunkenness. In Hackney, slipping out over the workhouse wall, which was so dilapidated as to be non-existent in parts, was endemic. Paupers could discharge themselves from the workhouse if so inclined and physically capable of going but there was a set procedure, forms and registers to be completed. Leaving without permission was seriously frowned on. The amount of disorderly conduct reported was however remarkably small.

From March 1835 to March 1842, the Poor Law Commissioners' Returns from East London Unions paint a picture of rather modest amounts of drunkenness and disorderly conduct.^{527 528} Clearly most problem behaviour was dealt with without recourse to magistrates. The highest rate of reported 'crime' was from Stepney. Over a 7 year period they reported 147 'misbehaviours, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, wilful damage or refusal to work and 9 thefts. Half of the offenders were under 20

years of age. This amounts to less than a couple of offences each month. Bethnal Green reported 85 minor offences including only 1 theft, Whitechapel similar numbers, Hackney only 11 offences and St George in the East none whatever. St George's returns are suspect; Mr Stone's work generates little confidence. On the other hand, conditions in the St George workhouse were so superior to living conditions outside the house, there might be a natural tendency for the inmates to behave well. The one group that the parish officers regarded as a serious 'management' problem was the girls.

The Guardians were so troubled by the girls' misbehaviour that Thomas Stone wrote to James Kay in February 1839 seeking guidance on how to tackle the specifically young, 'dissolute' women.⁵²⁹ A gang of young teenage girls, officially inmates of the workhouse but in reality working as prostitutes along the docks, had the habit of absconding every evening to ply their trade, spent the small hours drinking their earnings, then turned up at all hours of the night and early morning claiming to be destitute, seeking re-admission. The workhouse master felt obliged to let them in, having received numerous reminders from the Poor Law Commissioners of the obligation to admit the destitute. "We have been plagued for a year with these women" Stone wrote. The leader of the gang was one Elvina Benneworth, aged 18, admitted to the workhouse aged 6, having been abandoned at birth at Aldgate workhouse.

She has long been the leader of the refractory, incites them to idleness and disobedience by her example and advice. Her conversation is usually made up of impious oaths and disgusting vulgarity. She has also returned home drunk and insolent after the indulgence of a holiday. Having defective vision, she has not been urged to hard work but can and does read, which she says suits her better than needlework.

The Guardians caused a number of separate work rooms to be erected....but they have been found to be utterly useless. On being placed in the rooms they (the girls) have by screams and violence, beating the doors and breaking the windows, compelled their release; the disturbance being sufficient to alarm the neighbourhood.... They are insensible to reproof and heedless of punishment... They occasion constant disorder in the house, ruin the morals of the younger girls and excite amongst them insubordination and dislike to places of service.

Kay was as nonplussed as the Guardians as how to manage these girls. Stone had suggested that maybe there should be a separate institution for them, Kay agreed that segregation might help.⁵³⁰ 'Identify and classify' would have been a good motto for the Poor Law Commission. Stepney had a similar problem at Wapping workhouse 100 yards down the Highway. In April 1839, Kay wrote formally to his Commission colleagues about the inconvenience of unrestricted re-admission of young women of profligate character in Stepney and other dockside unions, supporting the notion of separate institutions.⁵³¹ No such institution was built. The Guardians and their employed officers were clearly not used to managing violent, aggressive or difficult behaviour.

Let us leave the engaging Guardians of St George in the East mulling over the coming cholera epidemic in February 1849.⁵³² Cholera, expected for two months past, arrived in the workhouse with two casuals. The medical officers wanted to separate them and any future cases from other workhouse inmates by some means. The Board decided to rent any available empty house in Wellclose Square, no tenders requested, at whatever rent was necessary. The Guardians of St George in the East spent when they felt it was desirable and spent when perhaps they should have debated.

The official statistics collected by the Poor Law Commission provide ample evidence of the generosity of St George in the East. The Board was particularly indulgent to workhouse inmates. The 'in-relief' budget in 1840 was £196.8 per 1000 parish pop'n, nearly double that of Stepney, Whitechapel, Poplar and Holborn and three times as much as Hackney and Bethnal Green.⁵³³ Only the City Unions within the wealthy Corporation area could rival St George in the East in pounds spent per head. St George was less out of line with its neighbours in spending on outdoor relief, being in the middle range of expenditure at about £75 per 1000 pop'n. St George in the East topped the poll of East London parishes for total poor budget both in the three years prior to the Poor Law Amendment Act and in the years following.

Figure 5.2 Percentage Fall in Poor Relief from Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. For Average of 3 Years before the act to 1840

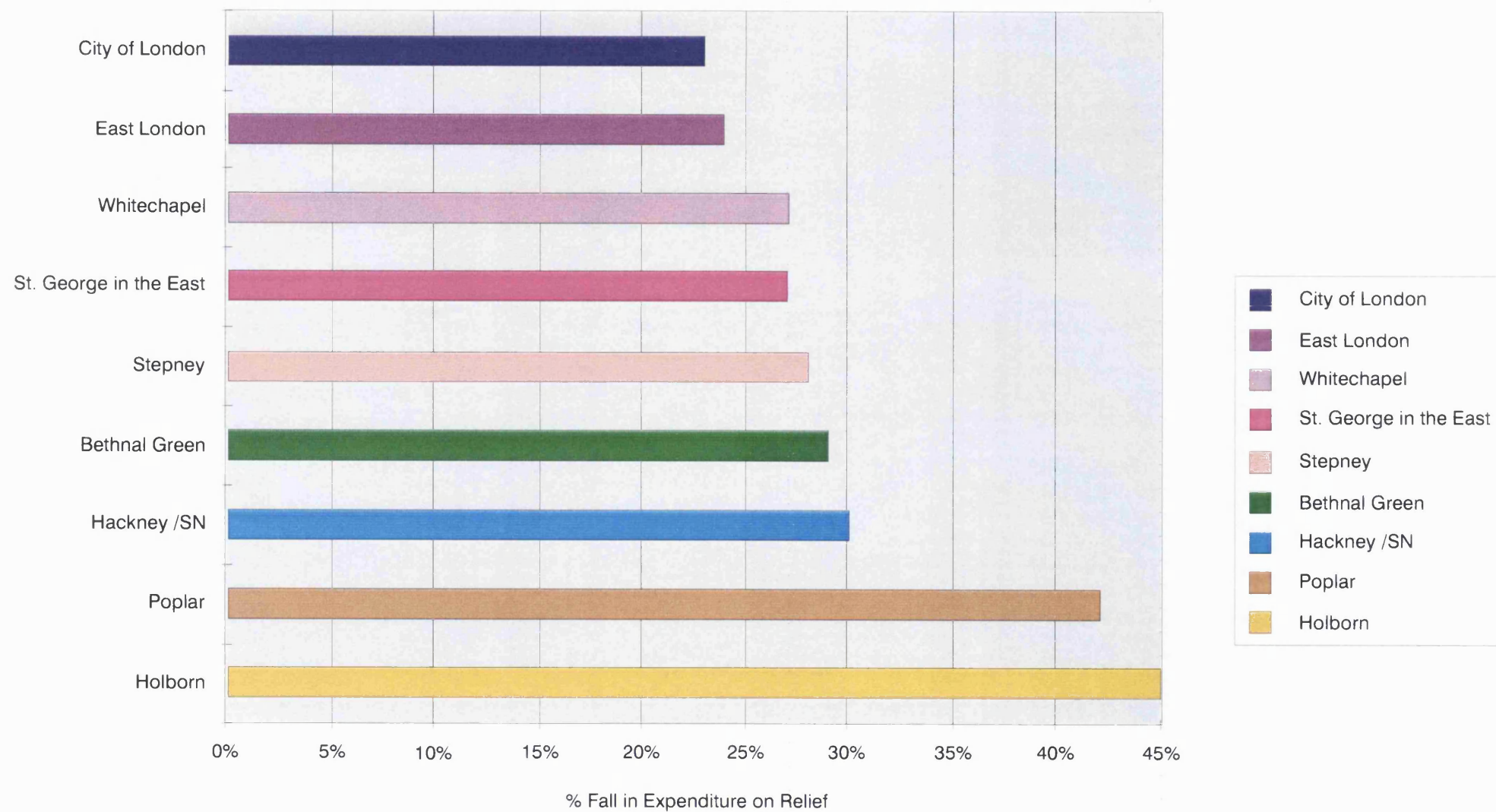
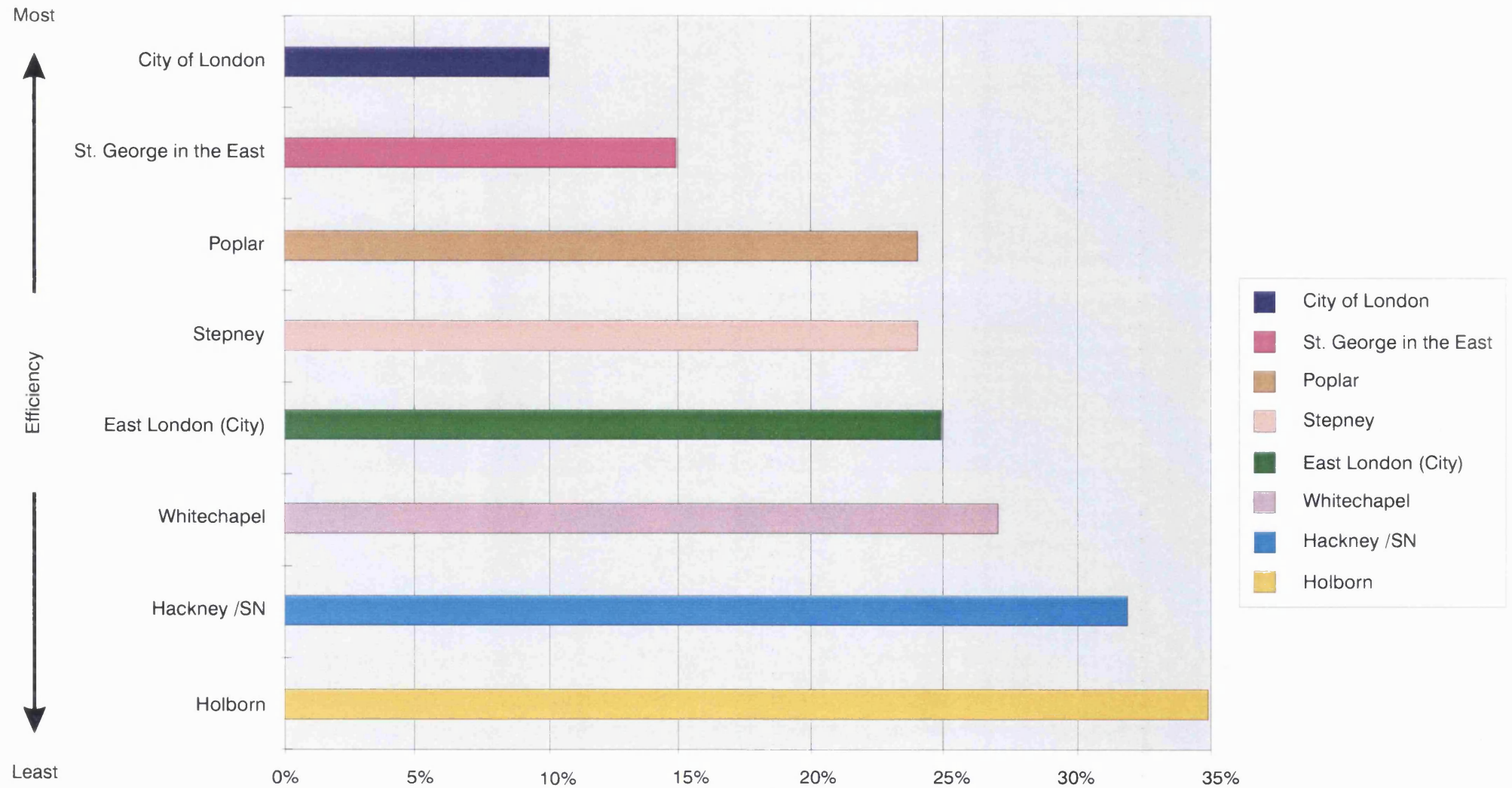


Figure 5.3 Administration (staff) Costs as a Percentage of Poor Relief. (Efficiency Index). 1841 East London Unions



£ spent per 1000 population on staff as a poportion of the total poor budget per 1000 population. (Census data 1841, Parliamentary Annual Review 1842)

By 1842 the Commission was confident that the Amendment Act was working to reduce poor rate burden as had been intended. The drop in spending on poor relief from before the Act up to 1840 was striking.⁵³⁴ The percentage fall in spending was most notable in Poplar and Holborn and lowest in St George in the East and the City Corporation Unions (see figure 5.2 opposite).

St George Guardians were not however profligate on 'management costs'. While their employees were well paid, they employed fewer paid officers than other unions. In fact their spending per 1000 pop'n on salaries of union officers was lower, substantially lower, than their neighbours (see figure 5.3 opposite).⁵³⁵ This could explain in part why the Guardians were personally so heavily committed to the practical work that in other unions was delegated to the relieving officers and medical officers. In twentieth century 'admin-speak' their target efficiency was high; their administration costs per pound revenue of poor budget was low. Only the City of London Union, whose overall budget was huge, was more efficient on administration costs. In general the higher the budget the easier it is to control administration costs as a percentage of total budget. Nevertheless, St George's was more efficient than might be predicted from the size of their budget. Perhaps this efficiency in staffing appealed to the Commission. The Guardians received no letters of disapproval or adverse comments in reports on their high spending between 1836 and 1848. Mr Stone's casual rounding up of expenditure figures creates the suspicion that he may have been inclined to round down the statistical returns for expenditure on employees in an equally casual fashion but the general picture is not inconsistent with the tone of the minutes of Board meetings.

If the Commission was not complaining, the rate-payers were, and they complained more vociferously as the poor budget spiralled over the next twenty years. The Reverend GH McGill published a pamphlet in 1858, contrasting the inequality of burden of poor rates in two parishes of St George. St George in the East, where the poor rate had risen from 2/6d in the pound to 4s in the pound between 1836 and 1856 was compared with the well-heeled parish of St George, Hanover Square West, whose poor rate had fallen from 2/6d in the pond in 1836 to a paltry 7 pence by 1856.⁵³⁶

McGill pointed out that the massive increase in rates had funded a trebling of the numbers of persons on poor relief in St George in the East, an increase of five times the number of persons receiving medical relief and an increase in the provision of meat for the sick poor from 6-7lb in 1836 to 300lb per week in 1858. Nevertheless, funds were inadequate to sustain the poor satisfactorily. The average London parish expenditure per week of 2s 9d per pauper, which included the costs of all medicines as well as workhouse costs, meant that the outdoor poor suffered the greatest hardship. The rate burden, McGill stressed, fell on an already impoverished population of rate-payers. In 1858 there were 4,000 summonses in St George in the East for non-payment of rates and “many of the poor persons summoned are unable to pay”.⁵³⁷

The Guardians of St George in the East went about their business with precious little regard for the burden their style of administration would impose on their population. They blithely disregarded edicts coming out of Somerset House. And edicts, instructions, guidance and orders there were in abundance. In 1840 the Poor Law Commission issued 2,000 orders and executive letters, most as general orders. By 1842 they had reduced the number to 1400.⁵³⁸ The mountain of paper that poured out of Somerset House was staggering; every week the clerk would get another sackful of instructions to wade through. St George ignored the 1843 order that casual vagrants must be set to a task of work in exchange for food and lodging for the night. This deterrent had reduced the numbers of vagrants seeking relief by substantial numbers in the City of London and the majority of surrounding unions and parishes, except in Stepney, where numbers had gone up and in St George in the East where no change had been observed at all.⁵³⁹ Mr Stone’s pot of glue, which saved him so much time in copying Commission letters perhaps also saved him the trouble of reading them. He may have been too busy fretting about the unruly girls in the workhouse and organising the rota for the Guardians’ busy weekly schedule of visits to worry too much about the latest missive from Chadwick.

Poplar Union. The parish vestry of All Saints Poplar was in the vanguard of the fight against dependent pauperism long before 1834. A tough and determined committee of vestrymen had all but done away with outdoor relief for the able-bodied workless and

believed wholeheartedly in encouraging thrift, sobriety and self-reliance. Poor rates went down and pauperism was low although the vestry continued to support a modest number of sick and aged with out-relief.⁵⁴⁰ When Poplar was united with the 'softer' neighbouring parishes of Stratford le Bow (called simply Bow) and Bromley by Bow (called Bromley), the dominant culture that emerged in the new Board of Guardians was that of Poplar. The Board minutes are expansive but the records are now so frail they can only be viewed on fading brown microfilm. The culture of humourless, hard-hearted efficiency that permeates these minutes is as near to the punitive poor law that haunts Dickens' novels as any in East London. All must be orderly and appropriate, methodically done. Decisions must comply with central guidance. Frills, fripperies, kindness and humour were not much in evidence in Poplar Union.

Poplar parish's well organised, clean, tidy but austere workhouse in North Street was quickly adopted as the main union house and the secondary smaller one in Bow closed.⁵⁴¹ Almost at once the Board began to plan a larger, even more starkly ascetic institution to satisfy the drive to classification.⁵⁴² The original plans drawn up by John Morris are preserved.⁵⁴³ There is a small infirmary ward on the plans but no provision for the insane. Poplar claimed not to maintain any lunatics in the workhouse. The Parliamentary Return of 1842, declaring 0 lunatics in the workhouse was no clerical error. Board policy was to send lunatics to the Asylum on the Green and as soon as a place was available, to Hanwell. It is not clear why Poplar decided not to maintain even 'harmless' lunatics in the workhouse. The Guardians may have judged correctly that their grim regime was unsuitable.

Thomas Holder, for example, an inmate "of unsound mind" was reported by the Master to the Board and immediately removed to Bethnal Green Asylum.⁵⁴⁴ The Clerk wrote to Sir William Ellis at Hanwell to remind him that Poplar had both males and females waiting for admission. Hanwell was full but Ellis wrote six months later to explain that they hoped to be more helpful when the proposed new buildings were complete.⁵⁴⁵ The County Asylum was probably preferred to Bethnal Green on cost

grounds. Another lunatic, a casual called Williams was removed by the Thames Police from on board the ship *Emerald* anchored in the Blackwall Basin and sent immediately to Bethnal Green Asylum.⁵⁴⁶ “Ordered Relieving Officer to get made County Patient”. Williams’ wages from the ship (£6 3s 6d) were to be used for his care and also “to make reasonable compensation to the officers of the police for their trouble”. The Union paid the Thames Police 5s.

Poplar was cost conscious but also rule conscious. Union officers were paid at the lowest rate of all East London boards. The clerk was paid £160 per annum, the one Relieving Officer John Landale had a salary of £120 per annum and the three medical officers received £300 between them.⁵⁴⁷ The Union had a smaller population than other Guardians in East London (31,091 in the 1841 census) but the geographical area was large. Half the district was docklands, manufactories and wasteland soon to be filled up with rickety housing for displaced casual labourers from the City.⁵⁴⁸

The Poplar Guardians wasted no opportunity to make real the policy of ‘less eligibility’ and reduce poor rate costs. Central guidance instructed that outdoor relief should cease to aged and infirm people, like everyone else, whether or not they were well-established pensioners, unless there was clear evidence of absolute necessity or urgency. While Poplar parish had done away with outdoor relief prior to the Amendment Act, Bow and Bromley parishes had not. Flexing their new administrative muscles, just before Christmas 1837 the Union stopped the pensions of five elderly people ranging in age from 65 to 93 year old Elizabeth Kidd, living in Bow. Bow parish vestry protested about the inhumanity of the decision, the Churchwarden and vestrymen requesting the Union to reconsider.⁵⁴⁹ Sensitive to the delicate nature of relationships with its constituent parishes the Union agreed to exempt these five pensioners from the new ruling for the time being but stated unequivocally the Guardians’ commitment to not providing such pensions in the future. The Board had undertaken a systematic review of all 700 recipients of outdoor relief shortly after formation of the Union. The elected Guardians reviewed

^v Later in the century in the 1880s Poplar Union workhouse served the whole of East London as the workhouse for able-bodied paupers, feared for its austerity and harsh regime. The popular revolt came

personally all cases with names beginning with the initials from A to C, setting the pace and tone for the full detailed review by the Relieving Officer.⁵⁵⁰

The workhouse regime was grim. The customary daily pint of small beer was quickly abolished. Regular porter could only be prescribed on a temporary, individual basis to the aged and infirm.⁵⁵¹ Christmas Dinner was reduced in size in 1838 some years before the Poor Law Commission suggested all unions should provide a more frugal repast. Poplar's regular dietary was subsistence nutrition only, predominantly bread and gruel, with the least meat of the Commission's suggested options, a meagre allowance of 2oz cheese instead of meat. Poplar would not be troubled with the likes of Mary X in St George in the East who used to save up her cheese allowance to sell outside the workhouse whenever the opportunity arose.⁵⁵²

Poplar was the second lowest spender on lunatic placements in East London. Only Bethnal Green spent less per head of population. Poplar spent £15 9s 0d per 1000 population in 1842, less than half what St George in the East spent.⁵⁵³ They sent 95% of their insane paupers to Hanwell, 5% to Bethnal Green Asylum and rigorously extruded mentally disordered paupers from the workhouse into specialist institutions. This was not necessarily a bad policy as far as the lunatic paupers were concerned, bearing in mind Poplar's grim and joyless workhouse regime.

St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor 1834-46 and Board of Guardians January 1836 to March 1837

Mitford provided this helpful ditty to locate Shoreditch:

[The City borders it]
As do Bethnal Green and Islington
Its green fields and dusty Rhoads^w
The swampy Plane of Homerton
Its frogs and creaking toads
Old Hackney too with its small Wick
Upon our eastern border

in the form of **Poplarism** in the first decade of the twentieth century (Ryan P 1985 op cit 137-172).

^w A reference to **William Rhodes'** huge brickfields in Kingsland stretching from Shoreditch to Hackney border. Rhodes was a governor of St Luke's Hospital.

And Luke's, all in disorder.⁵⁵⁴

The Parish of St Leonard Shoreditch had acquired three separate acts concerned with the administration of outdoor relief, employment of the able-bodied poor and the creation of a new workhouse, in 1774, 1775 and 1813. The Poor Law Commission believed in the early days of their administration that the Amendment Act superseded these old local acts and issued orders for the appointment of Boards of Guardians to replace the local Trustees of the Poor.

The parishes of St Matthew Bethnal Green and St George in the East had also operated under local Acts before 1834 but quickly established their own Boards of Guardians after the Amendment Act. Bethnal Green was enthusiastic about the new ideology.⁵⁵⁵ St George in the East possibly did not intend a new regime would make any difference to the way they managed the poor budget. In contrast the parishes of St Leonard Shoreditch and St Luke Old Street were radically opposed to the Amendment Act. St Leonard's vestry minutes, in draft form much corrected, smudged, blotted and difficult to read, covering the period 1833 to 1837 are mostly tedious accounts of formal votes for appointing Trustees of the Poor and various other committees for lighting, paving and sweeping.⁵⁵⁶ The minutes of the Trustees of the Poor however are very full and cover the 1830's at a cracking pace. Fortnightly evening meetings rattled through a huge amount of business. The practical administration of the poor budget was diverted on occasion by long fiery speeches by the chairman, George Pearce and by John Bewley, aimed at the "misguided, ruinous" policies of the Duke of Wellington's Tory government.⁵⁵⁷

Under the leadership of Charles Chapple, the Churchwarden who took the chair in 1835, the Trustees decided to petition the Poor Law Commission to continue their current local act administration. They were received by the three-man Commission but reported back that they had merely been given an order to appoint a parish Board of Guardians immediately. It was noted with some despondency that the Commissioners "expressed themselves decidedly averse to evening meetings and long speeches".⁵⁵⁸

Accepting defeat for the moment, the vestrymen established a 21 member Board of Guardians. The Clerk to the Vestry, John Ware, also Clerk to the Trustees, acquired a third job as Clerk to the Guardians. He spent the next fifteen months writing letters to himself in his various capacities, from Guardians to Trustees requesting money, £300, £600, £500, for various tasks and from the Trustees to the Guardians, refusing to allocate cash or delaying its transfer.⁵⁵⁹ Since these Guardians' minutes have not survived, it is not known who the Guardians were or what the new Board did, if anything. The Trustees, the closed vestry and the open vestry, which was called at the instigation of the closed vestry and Trustees when a major debating issue arose, continued to discuss poor relief as before. John Coste the relieving officer took an active part and the three parish medical officers apparently continued to work as usual under the direction of the Trustees.

The Commission discovered at some point in 1836 or 37, that the Amendment Act could not be imposed on unwilling parishes. Shoreditch emerged jubilant after a year long battle with the Commissioners. The churchwardens called a public parish meeting on March 16 1837 in the evening "to receive the revocation order from the Poor Law Commissioners to the Clerk to the Board of Guardians relative to their abandonment of any order for any New Board of Guardians and authorising the Trustees of the Poor to resume their functions".⁵⁶⁰ A crowd of at least 234 parishioners turned up to the vestry room, so they reassembled the meeting inside the church. Mr Pearce moved a motion of censure against the Commission. "[The Trustees] feel the utmost indignation in creating an illegal Board of Guardians in this parish with the attendant expense of additional clerks and auditors amounting to about £500 per annum thereby adding to the rates of this parish." The motion was carried 100 to 2. John Bewley, the Trustees' most flamboyant radical orator then took the floor.

That as the poor have an inalienable right of provision of the land also a tenure of the lay impropriations of the church which were originally left their use and support, this public vestry feel it is incumbent upon them to express their deep regrets that a Whig government should sanction the deprivation of the poor of these rights and make a law which reduces the poor man below the felon, the convict and the outlaw, by starving

them in sickness, separating him from his wife and incarcerating him in old age after a life of laborious toil and honest industry.

This naturally brought the house down—motion carried 230 for, 4 against. Someone, perhaps one of the four, remembered to thank the hapless Guardians for their efforts and that was the end of the Shoreditch Guardians until 1858, when a new act finally enabled the Poor Law Board to impose a Board of Guardians on the parish. Even then, the reincarnated Board delayed their first meeting, extraordinarily, for a further ten years until 18 December 1868, thirty-four years after the Amendment Act.⁵⁶¹

There is considerable dissonance between John Bewley's flowery rhetoric and the relieving officer John Coste's practical administration of the poor budget. Elected officers' aspirations must often have been disappointed but there's a whiff of humbug in Bewley's 'playing to the gallery'. He must have known about Coste's habitual refusal to relieve destitute paupers on the orders of the Worship Street magistrates' orders and the Commission's lengthy observations in 1834 on the chaotic Shoreditch poor relief system.⁵⁶² The parishioners reviled Coste for his heartlessness.

At another parish meeting in 1843, ⁵⁶³ "The sacred edifice presented one continuous scene of clamour and uproar, the most disgraceful altercation which terminated in a general fight between the rate payers and the authorities, during which blows were struck and central seats overturned."

There was a long and riotous dispute over the poor rate led by members of the anti-Church party, during which the rate payers managed to reduce the poor rate to £5798 from the vestry's proposed rate of £7885. Curiously, the mayhem [begun at 3.00pm] ceased at 6.00pm to allow prayers to be read at the accustomed hour but recommenced immediately afterwards.

Mr Thomas then said he had a charge of cruelty against John Coste, the Relieving Officer. The son of a poor woman was so severely injured by an accident that he could not walk. The widow applied to Coste for crutches when Coste replied "We have no crutches, get him a pair of broom handles" (Loud cries of Horrid, horrid, turn the wretch out). Mr Lawson substantiated the charge. A respectable rate-payer had heard Coste making use of the saying. (Loud cries of Turn the wretch out). Mr Coste rushed forward from behind the Trustees and amidst their cheers, declared the charge was false. Several voices interjected with other charges of cruelty. Dr Purland

described the Relieving Officer as a most cruel man and declared to his own knowledge that the paupers were treated heartlessly.

Local politics in Shoreditch was a hot-headed kind of activity. The closed vestry squabbled over their radical politics, thought of themselves as Whig supporters but were disappointed with the 1832 Reform Act and disillusioned further by the Poor Law Amendment Act. Did the fiery Bewley, Pearce or Gough frequent the East End haunts of the 'ultra-radical' liberals? In the early 1830's, Thomas Preston, the Spencean 'blackguard artisan and radical' cobbler had his stall in Eagle Court, City Road, only 100 yards from the Hoxton boundary.⁵⁶⁴ The seedy alehouses and the 'blasphemous chapels' in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green where in the 1820's and 30's the "garrulous, convivial [ultras]...loved to drink, sing, carouse and debate, ...used the exhortatory language of the scriptures and the populist rhetoric of the London mob" would seem possible ports of call for these vestrymen.⁵⁶⁵

On the other hand Shoreditch closed Vestry had been the target of one faction of the 'ultra's'. Jack Mitford's scurrilous and amusing pamphlet series *Hoxton Sausage and Jerry Wags Journal* published in 1826 poked fun at them:^x

We have conferred upon the seventy two rulers of Shoreditch the pithy and antique term of 'the Sanhedrin' in order to procure for them a distinction in society as a body they have hitherto strove for in vain and without any reference whatever to their learning, wit or understanding, occupation, ambition or known corruptibility. ...Members of the Sanhedrin...should be styled MS, like MPs, since they are for life. ...If he carefully oppose everything, approve of nothing, gives tongue at straw and ear to nought he will shortly become a distinguished member of the Sanhedrin.

Shoreditch was not Mitford's only local target. "If he be desirous of polishing up his parish purpose rhetoric, of acquiring the beauties of vestry meeting oratory...he will not fail to visit Bethnal Green brawlers in public vestry". He also had a go at Islington and St Luke's.

Parishes under existing Acts, even though they were not obliged to adopt the Amendment Act's organisational provisions, were bound by various rules and

^x **John Mitford**, hack writer, pornographer, ultra radical, dissolute drunkard and from time to time mad, was an inmate of Warburton's Whitmore House at one time, see Appendix B.

regulations under the Act, some of which, like the General Medical Order of 1842, they argued successfully against implementing. Others like workhouse regulations, at least the Commission maintained, they were obliged to follow.

The Poor Law Commission detested the continuing existence of these 'Local Act' parishes that held on to their Overseers and Trustees of the Poor. St Leonard Shoreditch and its immediate neighbour, St Luke's Old Street were both governed by closed vestries of self perpetuating oligarchies, although Shoreditch had open public meetings to muster support when the Vestry felt the need.

There are no facilities for dissolution of these Unions [and] their continuance is not beneficial to the rate payers....they do not prevent or discourage pauperism of the able bodied on the other hand do not afford to the really destitute that certainty of adequate relief which it was the intention of the Act to provide for them.⁵⁶⁶

St Luke's Trustees in particular were singled out by the Commission for special censure for being neglectful of destitute paupers although they could just as easily have chosen Shoreditch.⁵⁶⁷

The main "problem", Assistant Commissioner Twistleton wrote, was not that parishes operating under local acts were particularly inefficient or indeed very different from local Boards of Guardians in their distribution of poor relief but that they refused to acknowledge the authority of the Commission and were governed in an undemocratic way.⁵⁶⁸

It is intelligible that others may prefer the system of self selection in the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch as tending to ensure permanency and consistency in the mode of distributing relief and as elevating the administrative body above the influences and perhaps caprices of the popular will.⁵⁶⁹

There may be good and sufficient reasons (although these reasons are not in general very apparent) why the constitution of local boards should be various. There may for example be good reasons why the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch should be governed for poor law purposes by a body of Trustees elected for life, one half by themselves and one half by the vestry and continuing in office for 3 years.... But it is not desirable that the diversity should be carried further than local circumstances demand.⁵⁷⁰

There were remarkably few arguments the Commission could muster to demonstrate the practical disadvantages of local acts. Their main bleat seems unconvincingly limp, that 'single act parishes' did not call the person responsible for administering poor relief 'Relieving Officer'. Some continued using the older local name 'Assistant Overseer', 'Overseer of the Poor', 'agent', 'inspector of the poor' and so on, which would, they opined, confuse the local poor. Since they had been called by these names for years this is not a very convincing argument.^y The Commission reminded St Luke's and St Leonard's of the need to implement central workhouse regulations but do not say whether their reminder was effective.⁵⁷¹

St Luke's finally joined the Holborn Union in 1847 but Shoreditch clung on to their old organisational structure for a further 20 years. It seems to have made little difference to local pauper lunatics that they were denied the provisions of the Amendment Act. The parish did not supply Returns of Pauper Lunatics in 1842 and rarely discussed them at Trustees' meetings. They continued to use Hoxton House Asylum, by then under the superintendence of Edward Langdon Bryan and sent new cases to St Luke's Hospital but during the 1840's the parish followed the general local trend of placing lunatics at Hanwell. The only major difference between Shoreditch and the East End districts which had adopted the Amendment Act was their continued use of St Luke's Hospital up until the Lunatics Act of 1845 and the willingness of the parish to 'top up' the fees of pauper patients sent there. St Luke's parish also used the Hospital frequently. Whether this was because of their proximity to the hospital or to their Local Act status is unclear.

Conclusion: the Economics of Care for the Insane in 1841: Trading Off Costs, Quality and Demand. The new East London Guardians faced some challenging problems. Their huge populations had doubled or tripled since the beginning of the century. Resentful, poor working class rate-payers depended on them to keep a close

^y This was not true anyway of Shoreditch. In 1835-7, Coste was called Relieving Officer. Whitechapel Union on the other hand continued with the term Assistant Overseer.

eye on spending but the heavily pauperised population was used to a generous provision of outdoor relief in lean times. Poplar was the exception, where the vestry had been practising frugality for years and had already dispensed with most outdoor relief. The Guardians' capital estate consisted of an assortment of dilapidated poorhouses, workhouses and remote children's institutions in the country. The buildings were inadequate in fabric and size; most parishes had used pauper farm placements extensively for the refractory and incompetent. Arranging the care of lunatics and idiots would probably have been well down the list of their priorities except for the fact that placements were costly and managing disturbed behaviour disruptive of workhouse routine. Comparative statistics reveal interesting differences in approach between Boards of Guardians.

The Parliamentary Returns for England and Wales, collected from 1842, required Boards of Guardians to list the number in the total population, the number of paupers identified as "lunatic or idiot", numbers in the County Asylum, in private licensed houses, in the workhouse and those supported elsewhere, for example receiving outdoor relief and finally the weekly costs of each institution.⁵⁷² The County of Middlesex Returns reported major differences between East London unions in their use of Hanwell, private licensed houses and workhouses. (Shoreditch did not submit returns because it had not formed a Board of Guardians and did not consider itself bound by the regulations on submitting statistics). Institutional costs differed greatly between unions. Workhouses were generally cheap compared with elsewhere in London, the average Middlesex workhouse cost 3s 8d per week per person, but a little more expensive than the average for England and Wales of 2s 10d. Costs in East London varied from 2s 10¾d in the City's East London Union and 2s 11d in Whitechapel, up to 4s 9¾d in Stepney.

By 1842 Hanwell's weekly charge was comparable with other county asylums at 9s 0½d per week. Clitherow, Chairman of the Visiting Justices, was proud of his success in keeping costs down by increasing capacity in the late 1830s. In 1836 he wrote that Hanwell contained 604 patients, "rather more than double for which it was intended" "This augmentation has been achieved without unwholesome overcrowding....and

without any pecuniary call on the County except £284 15s 6d".⁵⁷³ Costs had been squeezed down from 6s 5d to 5s 10d per week. But after Conolly's arrival and the new chairman Adams' determination to support the improved staffing ratio that was required for the non-restraint policy, costs went up dramatically.⁵⁷⁴

Table 5.1 shows the unions' institutionalisation rate per 1000 population and the percentage of lunatics and idiots admitted to each type of institution or maintained on out-relief, derived from the returns and from the 1841 census figures. The same pattern of spending across the East End unions was maintained in the following years' Annual returns up to 1845.⁵⁷⁵ Table 5.2, derived from the figures in Table 5.1, shows the average spend per patient per annum and spending per 1000 population on lunatics and idiots per annum.

Table 5.1 East London Union Costs for Placement of Lunatics and Idiots 1841-1842

Union	1841 Census	No insane	Rate per 1000 pop'n	% Hanwel l CLA	% License d House	% Work House	% Elsewh ere	Total Costs
Bethnal Green	74,087	46	0.6	74%	19%	6.5%	0.6%	£20 6s. 6d
St George East	41,351	79	1.9	42%	16%	37%	5%	£26 14s 3d
Hackney	42,274	67	1.6	37%	13%	30%	-	£15 18s 0d
*City London	55,967	96	1.9	-	64%	26%	9%	£34 5s 0d
*East London	39,655	50	1.3	6% (other CLA)	64%	26%	4%	£17 14s 0d
Poplar	31,091	21	0.7	95%	5%	-	-	£9 10s 0d
Stepney	90,657	101	1.1	38%	12%	48%	2%	£34 0s 0d
Whitechapel	71,758	109	1.5	46%	5%	46%	4%	£27 0s 0d

*City of London and East London Unions were not entitled to use Hanwell Asylum

Fig 5.4: Impact of Declared Institutionalisation Rates. Comparative Spending on Lunatics and Idiots, East London Unions, 1842

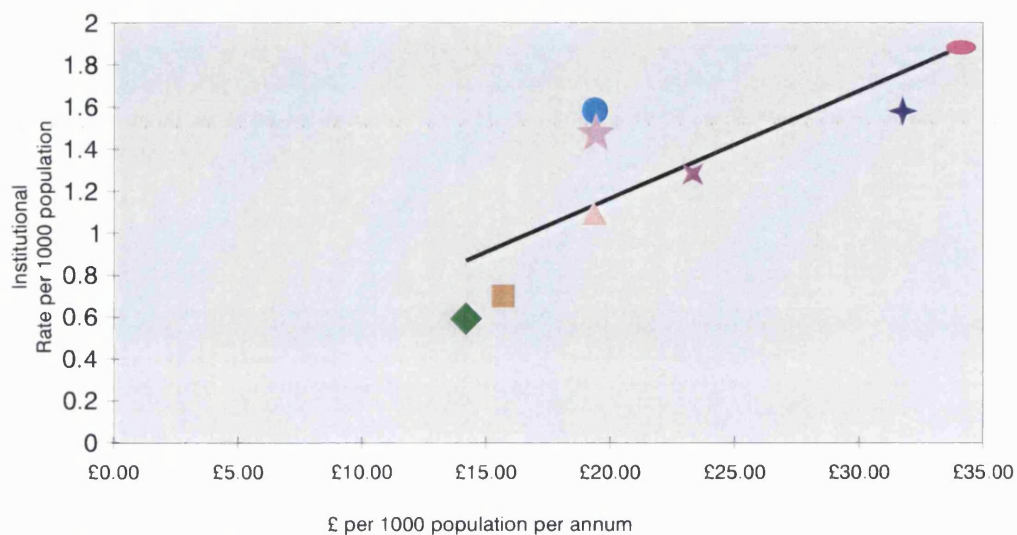


Fig 5.5: Impact of Individual Placement Choice on Spending on Lunatics and Idiots, East London Unions, 1842

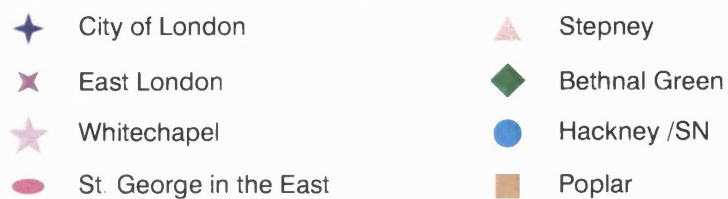
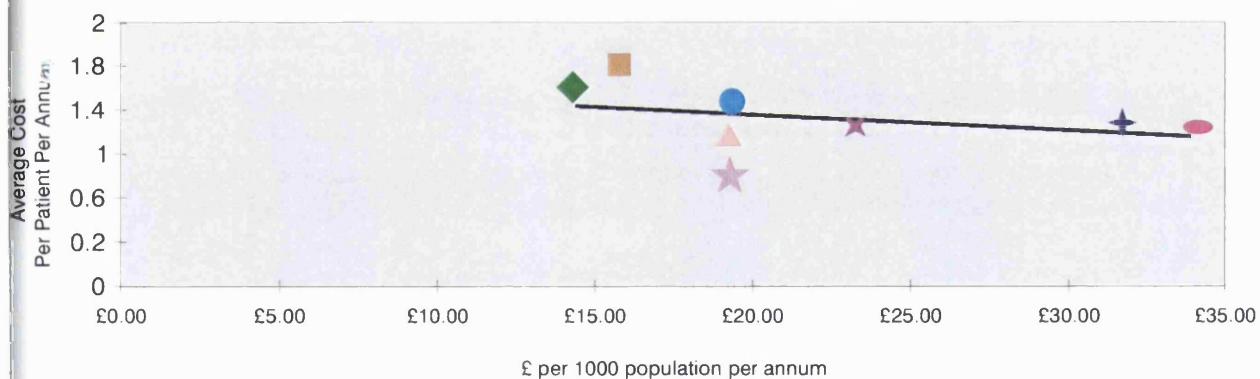


Table 5.2 Total Annual Spend, Average Annual Spend per Patient and Spending Rate on Lunatics and Idiots, East London Unions 1841-1842 (from Parliamentary Returns 1842)

Union	Total Spend	Annual	Average spend per patient per annum	Spending per 1000 pop'n per annum
Bethnal Green	£1057		£23 0s 0d	£14 3s 0d
St George East	£1391		£17 6s 0d	£34 0s 0d
Hackney	£1398		£21 0s 0d	£19 5s 0d
City of London	£1781		£18 5s 0d	£31 8s 0d
East London	£923		£18 5s 0d	£23 3s 0d
Poplar	£494		£23 5s 0d	£15 9s 0d
Stepney	£1768		£17 5s 0d	£19 4s 0d
Whitechapel	£1404		£12 9s 0d	£19 5s 0d

Figure 5.4 illustrates how the overall rate of spending per 1000 population was largely determined by the institutionalisation rate. St George in the East and the City of London Unions had high institutionalisation rates, whereas Bethnal Green and Poplar kept costs down overall by low numbers of placements. Bethnal Green and Poplar were also the highest users of Hanwell (74% and 95% respectively of their lunatics were sent there), at a high per patient cost compared with their neighbouring unions. Spending per patient largely reflects choice of placement and correlates only weakly with total spending per population, as is clear from Figure 5.5.

The two City of London Unions shown in the graph, City of London and East London Unions (there was a third West London Union which covered Holborn and the western end of the Square Mile) were not entitled to use Hanwell. The Corporation Aldermen had refused to collaborate with the Middlesex Justices in building an Asylum. The City Guardians continued to place the majority of patients in Hoxton House and Bethnal Green Asylums, retaining a quarter or so of their lunatics in the House and supporting lunatics with outdoor relief. St George's high costs are largely attributable to the high numbers in the workhouse designated as lunatics.

The principal difficulty with this analysis is the accuracy of the original statistics. Not all Clerks were as obsessional as William Baker in Stepney, poring over his returns to categorise and classify.⁵⁷⁶ Unions were not permitted officially after 1834 to place lunatics in the workhouse although there was tacit acceptance that harmless chronic cases and idiots could remain. Poplar Union's repeated blank entry where "workhouse placements" should be recorded may reflect the Union's desire to comply with central guidance. On the other hand their minutes suggest that they actively sought to prevent lunatics coming into the workhouse and very quickly moved anyone waiting for Hanwell to Bethnal Green in the interim. The figures in the annual returns may not be exactly accurate; the numbers are inconsistent across columns in the original returns. Even so, they can probably be accepted as a broad reflection of policy and a reasonable approximation of how much each union was spending on the care of identified lunatics per annum.

If the numbers reported on the returns are broadly accepted, there are other potential sources of error in the costings. The attribution of workhouse costs was calculated from averages that include the costs of able-bodied inmates but real costs would vary according to the dependency of the individual. Infirmary and insane wards with even minimal staff would have per capita costs more than those for able-bodied paupers, but these variations were not taken account of, creating the false impression that workhouse placements for the insane were far cheaper than they probably were in reality. Three of the higher cost workhouses, in Stepney, City of London and St George in the East, also contained the highest number of lunatics, suggesting that highly dependent paupers pushed up the overall costs of the workhouse. Whitechapel is the exception here. They declared 50 lunatics but reported very low workhouse costs. The Returns are probably accurate on out-placement costs, which were consistently low in London.

Was it better to fund a few specialist placements for a selected minority, as Bethnal Green and Poplar did, or spread resources more thinly over a larger number? On the evidence of these figures, Poplar and Bethnal Green look better 'managed' in that they

kept costs down and sent selected patients to the approved institution. Reading the minutes reveals both were joyless penny-pinching organisations.

The Boards also varied greatly in their efficiency in the use of public funds. St George in the East had low administrative costs compared with other unions. Their target efficiency, that is the percentage of total budget spent on administration compared with that spent on direct care costs, was high because they employed fewer staff to administer the budget. In general the larger the overall budget the easier it is to achieve economies of scale but in St George's case their efficiencies were achieved by the active voluntary participation of the elected Guardians in the day to day visiting work that in other unions was done by employees.

The parishes and unions of East London were as culturally distinctive in their style of administration of the new poor law in the early years after the Act as the parishes had been under the old regime. The Guardians personally determined the local interpretation of the regulations and had considerable autonomy if they had the capacity for, and chose to exercise, leadership. The care of pauper lunatics changed directly as a result of the Act only insofar as the ban on 'topping up' family funds deterred them from using St Luke's Hospital often and out-relief to families to support relatives at home more or less ceased. The economic recession of the post-war years had already reduced poorer London parishes' use of out-relief; the Act confirmed the trend albeit that the changes intended to take effect after the Act occurred more rapidly in some unions and parishes than others. Workhouse wards were improved somewhat during these years under the coercive threats of the Poor Law Commission and the Commission's complaints system provided an appeal procedure of sorts. The greater change for pauper lunatics in London however came with the opening of the Middlesex County Lunatic Asylum at Hanwell, the competition that imposed on the huge licensed houses and the developing ethos of treatment imposed in the context of custody.

Chapter 6: The Middlesex Magistrates and the County Asylums

Hanwell and the East End Parishes. The County Lunatic Asylum at Hanwell opened in May 1831,⁵⁷⁷ the initiative of the ambitious Middlesex Justices, who were ready to 'jump onto the Reform bandwagon' when given an opportunity to do so, as Suzuki puts it.⁵⁷⁸ They were proud of their 'advanced' system of administration in their prison at Coldbath Field, Clerkenwell, having adopted the new 'silent' system as an alternative to the solitary confinement method beloved of the new government prisons inspectorate.⁵⁷⁹ The Asylum Committee was established in 1827, initially chaired by the genial country squire type, Colonel Clitherow and became the formal governing body when the Asylum opened.

Under Clitherow's chairmanship the running of the Asylum was left to the first medical superintendent, Ellis but by 1838 their collusive, mutually trusting style was no longer acceptable to the rest of the Asylum Committee. Interventionist magistrates such as Serjeant-at-Law John Adams and Charles Augustus Tulk wanted to impose greater control over the day to day affairs of the Asylum. The laissez-faire, devolved management approach espoused by Clitherow was at odds with the characteristic controlling way the Magistrates handled other matters. The Prison Committee, chaired by Charles Tulk, believed in direct, 'hands-on' interference in all operational matters. It is not surprising that when Tulk joined the Asylum Committee in 1838 and Adams, the chairman of the Justices from 1836 to 1844, decided to join the Asylum Committee personally in 1839, they set about establishing the same controls that they believed had served them well in their prisons. Their first major assault on Clitherow's methods was the removal of Ellis's power of appointment of Asylum staff, prompting first Ellis's resignation and leading indirectly to Clitherow's stepping down as Chairman of the Committee.⁵⁸⁰

The early administration of Hanwell has been well covered by Suzuki,⁵⁸¹ Hunter and Macalpine,⁵⁸² Scull⁵⁸³ and others but as far as the East End parishes were concerned it was all happening a long way off. The East London Trustees and Boards of Guardians' minutes are silent about the running of Hanwell under Ellis's

superintendence. There were however criticisms of Ellis from the two wealthy but populous parishes of St George Hanover Square and St James Westminster. In 1835 they petitioned the Quarter Sessions,⁵⁸⁴ protesting at Ellis's profligacy and accusing the Asylum Committee of being irresponsible, recommending that the Asylum should be run with the same frugality as workhouses. Serjeant Adams' "luminous and able" reply refuted the claim totally.⁵⁸⁵ Adams defended the system of retaining surplus monies from parishes accrued by in-year cost-saving measures adopted in the Asylum, in order to spend the surplus on enlarging and improving the buildings.

St George Hanover Square's repeated but isolated challenges to the running of the Asylum were probably motivated, Suzuki judges, by the allegiance of Henry Knight, a Whig MP and member of the St George Vestry, to his political ally Lord John Russell, the Home Secretary, who was at loggerheads with the Middlesex Justices over their style of administration of their prisons.⁵⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Home Secretary believed he had the right to appoint the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions Court, a privilege the Middlesex magistrates denied him, continuing to elect their own chairman.⁵⁸⁷

Ellis was certainly a poor record keeper. Conolly's obsessively compiled statistical tables and the Treasurer Morrison's detailed accounts are a welcome contrast to the 'minimum data set' provided by Ellis, whose admission books and accounts are confusingly lackadaisical. Hackney parish charges, for example, were entered into several different non-consecutive pages, in no particular order with respect to other parishes. Parishes are called by different names in different places and given the multiple St James, St George, St Mary and St Leonard, no wonder bills were sometimes sent to the wrong parish. The system does not seem to have been sorted out until after 1839. Baker wrote from Stepney pointing out that one quarterly account was for the right amount but all the patients' names were wrong. He will pay it anyway but would like to have an amended list of patients for his records.⁵⁸⁸

Ellis may have kept poor records but during the years 1835 to 38, when he was criticised for mismanagement and overspending, he was successful in reducing the

weekly rate from 9s at the opening to 5s 3d in 1837 and 1838. The charge only rose significantly, but then dramatically, just before Conolly took up his appointment in June 1839, the extra funds being used to recruit more attendants required for the non-restraint policy.

The early Asylum Committee congratulated themselves that theirs was one of the cheapest asylums in Europe.⁵⁸⁹ The fall in costs had been achieved mainly by doubling the capacity of the Asylum and by keeping staff costs down.⁵⁹⁰ Serjeant Adams evidently thought it was too cheap and in mid-May 1839, persuaded his fellow magistrates to agree to a 60% increase in the charges.⁵⁹¹ Since this was just a fortnight before Conolly took up his post, it might be surmised that he discussed his vision for the Asylum with the Justices during the process of his appointment. Hence there would be broad agreement between Adams and Conolly on the need to increase staff numbers. Suzuki emphasises the important role of the Asylum Committee, particularly the singularly determined Adams,^a in the implementation of the non-restraint policy but acknowledges the influence of Conolly's own ideology.

The shift in administrative style from the benign paternalistic dictatorship of Ellis to the necessarily more remote management by the Asylum Committee should have had an effect on the parish authorities' dealings with Hanwell but it is not clear whether it had much practical impact. In Ellis's day, while admissions were initiated outside the Asylum, the final choice from the many paupers referred as suitable was largely controlled by Ellis personally. The parishes wrote describing the case and their reasons for requesting admission; Ellis acquiesced or not. None of these early letters survive but a later series of letters from parish officers from 1839 to 1844,⁵⁹² some addressed to Ellis long after his departure, suggests that parish relieving officers believed that Ellis's successor medical superintendents, Millingen and Conolly, still held the power to expedite the admission of a deserving case. A letter to Conolly from Joseph Doysett, Hackney Union Relieving Officer, on 26 December 1839⁵⁹³ requests a place for an unnamed woman, "the patient being a year at St Luke's and has to be removed, still unwell.... I have known the unfortunate woman a great many years and

should be personally obliged for an order". A scribble at the top reads "Answ'd 28th". The answer was evidently 'yes' since Doysett writes a few days later saying he is hoping to bring Mrs Taylor from St Luke's on 17th January.⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore, he has just been notified that William Snow, detained in Kensington Workhouse, "seized with insanity" belongs to Hackney and since his wife is already in the Asylum, could he bring him too? There are numerous letters from Relieving Officers and Clerks requesting places for lunatics currently held in workhouses but also wanting to book a place ahead for someone the parish officer believed would be better off in the Asylum.

In the first two to three years, before the asylum filled up, all comers were accepted. In spite of having control over the gate, Ellis was not successful at recruiting the 'right' patients from his point of view, those with a recent onset of lunacy that he considered potentially curable because his primary objective at that point was to fill up places as quickly as possible. In his first Annual Report to the Justices,⁵⁹⁵ written 8 months after the asylum opened, he expressed his frustration that the Asylum could hold 500 patients but only 254 had been sent. "The cause of so few having been admitted..[is]..many parishes have withheld their patients and the Magistrates have been unwilling to receive all the insane". Ellis and the Magistrates insisted that they wanted to admit recent cases they perceived as potentially recoverable but the parishes wanted to send long-standing cases. "It is a melancholy fact that there are in the County a great number incapable of profiting from the advantages which this institution can afford". For the parishes however, a "wait and see" policy for manageable cases and a short-term, local admission for "dangerous" cases was clearly preferable, both on the grounds of expense and convenience. The consequence was that the few they did send to Hanwell "were almost exclusively old cases",⁵⁹⁶ although "12 males and 8 females have been discharged cured, and only 2 relapsed".

Ellis complained about the cases sent to Hanwell in every subsequent Annual Report until his retirement in 1838. He was extremely pessimistic about the treatability of most admissions. Lunacy combined with epilepsy was common but "in such a class of patient it is perfectly hopeless to expect a cure...death alone can terminate their

^a For biographies of John Adams and Charles Tulk, see Appendix C

sufferings”.⁵⁹⁷ “In a great number of recent cases, insanity is caused through spirit drinking”, which he was likewise pessimistic about.⁵⁹⁸ Asylum doctors did not welcome drinkers, who had the irritating habit of waking up stone cold sane without any treatment whatever, were discharged “cured” and back to belligerent insanity within a week. There is a discussion of this issue and the difficulties in deciding when a habitual drunkard should be discharged in the Metropolitan Lunacy Commissioners’ Report of 1844.⁵⁹⁹

The legal process of committal set out by the 1828 Madhouses Act (9 Geo IV c41) required two medical certificates for private patients to be admitted to Licensed Houses, only one for a private patient to be admitted to a County Lunatic Asylum. Hanwell never took private patients. A pauper's admission to a County Asylum required one doctor's certificate and a magistrate's order or the joint signatures of an overseer, a clergyman, a doctor and a magistrate for a Licensed House. This variation in the process of certification determined that parish officers had to know where the patient was to be admitted before completing the process of certification, and hence the need for places to be booked ahead. As the number of vacancies dwindled, Ellis was able to be a little choosier about how the cases were prioritised for admission but the logistics of certification militated against the admission of recent cases and he was obliged to fill up with the long-term cases on offer.

It is not quite true to say as Hunter concluded from his study at Colney Hatch that medical superintendents “had no control over admissions, never saw patients before they came in and could only advise when a patient was well enough to be discharged”.⁶⁰⁰ Conolly and Begley (the second resident physician with Conolly) certainly had a significant influence on discharges but consecutive medical superintendents were as concerned as the Asylum Committee that the Asylum was kept full and cheap enough to be seen as a desirable placement by the parish authorities.⁶⁰¹

Wright⁶⁰² identified the process of admission to the Asylum as beginning in the patient's own home, the family being the usual initiator of the process. Walton's

study of committals to Lancaster Asylum pointed to admission being the outcome of a sequence of events arising from the fragmentation of the family structure in the wake of industrialisation and increased mobility of the working population.⁶⁰³ Walton found that the majority of admissions to asylums were from addresses outside the workhouse, who prior to their removal had been living in the family home. Many admissions were routed via the workhouse because that was the only place immediately available to the beadle, relieving officer or parish doctor when the point of crisis occurred. Families of course were not always sure of what they were seeking when they sought help; a demand to the relieving officer for help with a disturbed relative or neighbour was not necessarily formulated into an overt demand for removal to the workhouse or the Asylum. Furthermore, some relatives had matters taken out of their hands by interventionist parish officers. Confused old Joseph Lock, (see Chapter 1, p6) whose daughter was habitually drunk, was removed to the workhouse against her wishes and she complained noisily about it.⁶⁰⁴

On the other hand, relatives could intervene to stop a removal if they reasserted their competence to manage their sick relative at home. Hackney Relieving Officer Joseph Doysett, for example, had arranged for George Peake to be admitted to Hanwell in November '41. The vacancy was booked but the committal process had not yet been completed in front of the magistrate. When Doysett went to collect Peake from home, planning to take him before the magistrate and then straight on to Hanwell, Peake's wife "stated that as he is so quiet she would wish his removal postponed for a week, since when I have not heard any more about it and therefore consider that she means to keep him at home".⁶⁰⁵

In Hanwell's earliest years, there was no particular advantage for the parish officers in placing lunatic paupers at the County Asylum in preference to the well-known and trusted local licensed houses, nor any legal requirement to do so. The weekly charge of 9s per week was similar to that of Hoxton House and Bethnal Green Asylum. On the contrary there were positive disincentives to sending paupers to Hanwell, first because it was a good half-day's journey by carriage. There was a requirement to provide an escort, usually one of the beadles but sometimes the relieving officer

himself would be obliged to travel with patients being admitted or discharged, taking up a full day out of a heavy schedule. Doysett and his colleagues Rooke in St George in the East and Thomas Almond in Whitechapel liked to arrange a swap,⁶⁰⁶ collecting a discharged patient at the same time as bringing one in, saving the expense of one journey. Morrison, whose duties extended to dealing with all routine administrative correspondence and organising admissions and discharges regarded this as an unseemly practice. 'Swaps' could delay the filling or vacating of places but there was also something derogatory in the tone of the requests, as if paupers were mere parcels to be carted about.

Conolly complained that many paupers were brought to Hanwell "in a very wretched condition, ragged, emaciated, covered with vermin, marked with cords or iron handcuffs and terrified in consequence of previous injudicious treatment".⁶⁰⁷ A youth named George Cranley arrived barely alive, half frozen, having been transported from the parish of Edmonton on the back of an open cart in December 1844. Begley admonished the beadle who had brought him, who merely responded that it was not his fault, his Guardians wouldn't bear the expense of a closed carriage. The Guardians had in fact "expressly ordered a covered conveyance". The beadle of course had pocketed the cash difference in cost.^{608 b}

The same month a frail confused old man from St George Hanover Square arrived on the point of death, a not infrequent incident, prompting the Visiting Justices to exhort all parishes to "take such steps as shall ensure to exclude... such cases as admit neither of cure nor of alleviation".⁶⁰⁹ Asylum doctors kept a close eye on their mortality statistics since death rates were publicised in the Annual Returns. Decrepit old folk who expired shortly after arrival, as most did, were definitely undesirable. Parish officers would frame their requests for admission to conceal unappealing information, like the fact that someone was 80 years old and unable to stand up. St George Hanover Square misled the asylum over two cases in December 1844. Nesbitt, the Assistant Physician, complained they were "described as single, both are

^b **George Cranley** recovered his bodily health but his mental state was still poor a year later. (letter 846 Begley to Mr J M Ash 13 December 45. H11/HLL/A14/1/2)

widowed... both are very quiet, intellectually enfeebled by age. One is paralysed in both limbs and almost bedridden...Malice is described as paralysed, it is Champfield. Both are described as clean, one is dirty. Both are described as recent cases—incorrect..."⁶¹⁰ Champfield died a week after admission.

Evidence of rough and unskilled handling was distressingly common in new patients. Charles Scates from St George in the East arrived covered in bruises and rope binding sores. Scates had first been picked up wandering in Whitechapel and placed in the local Workhouse "where he had conducted himself with considerable violence." The officers of his settlement parish of St George had removed him to Hoxton House in the first instance from where he had been admitted to Hanwell "in a better condition than when he had gone into Hoxton House."⁶¹¹ Scates was one of three paupers admitted that month in a filthy, sick and bruised state suffering the effects of workhouse confinement; he died two months later.

By 1845 Whitechapel and Stepney were trying to adhere to the request to send only recent cases. No doubt the sudden drop in weekly charge achieved by massive expansion through '43 and '44 sweetened the policy approved both by the Visiting Justices and the new national Commission in Lunacy. "The male lunatic we were going to send a fortnight ago is now recovered. The magistrate is not likely to sign the order..." wrote Joseph Sargeant from Stepney but instead, could he bring down a female, "the Board of Guardians being desirous of sending only those who have a probability of recovery".⁶¹² This was a significant shift from the Boards' earlier position, when Hanwell was perceived to be the last resort for the behaviourally difficult or dangerous. In 1839 Poplar's Clerk, Kemp responded to an invitation from Morrison to send within the next 48 hours a female from the Union who was on the waiting list.

I rather doubt we shall be able to take the young woman down tomorrow and when we do we intend bringing back Green from our parish in order to place him at Byas's establishment close at hand.^c This is not a lunatic asylum. Our overseers think the

^c For Edward Byas's pauper farm Grove Hall at Bow see Chapter 3.

County Asylum best adapted for persons positively insane and requiring restraint. I will thank you to let me know by return of post if there is any form necessary to effect this.⁶¹³

Of course there was a form and this was another swap put in such a way that Morrison wouldn't take offence. The route into the Asylum was through a prescribed set of procedures that could be aborted but not side-stepped. The bureaucracy could not cope well at all with deviations from the proper sequence of events in which the production of evidence of an appropriate settlement and a proof of pauperdom were crucial 'rate limiting factors'. The case of Caroline Garvan, alias Sabasson, touched on in Chapter 5, illustrates how frustrating the system could be for relatives and friends.⁶¹⁴

Caroline Garvan, a young woman living under the protection of Mr Williams in Westminster, was found wandering in a confused state in Bethnal Green and brought to the workhouse by the relieving officer. Williams thought she might have a settlement in Whitechapel. The parish officers agreed with him she needed expert supervision and she was committed as a private patient to Bethnal Green Asylum, Mr Williams footing the bill for several weeks. Caroline's condition deteriorated, she became sicker, frailer and more distressed. Williams ran out of money. Mr Phillips, the surgeon superintendent at Bethnal Green Asylum announced he was discharging her forthwith but sent a note to the Clerk at Bethnal Green suggesting the Union should apply to get her made a County patient. Meanwhile he wanted the Clerk to pay the money already owing. The Bethnal Green Clerk had tried and failed to establish her settlement in Whitechapel and shift the bill on to them. Phillips ran out of patience as the money owing escalated and had Caroline taken to Williams' new lodgings in Westminster, Williams having by then moved from his old address. "I have done all in my power to get rid of this poor woman Caroline Sabassa (sic)." Phillips said, but he found that Williams (referred to erroneously as Walker throughout the Bethnal Green minutes) "had no visible means of supporting her". Further sharp letters were exchanged between the Bethnal Green Clerk and Phillips. Meanwhile Williams decided that Caroline's only hope was to get her into the County

Lunatic Asylum under Dr Conolly's care. Two of his several urgent letters to Conolly and Morrison survive. One of his queries was whether, if he took her before a magistrate himself, he could bypass the parish procedures.⁶¹⁵

The object is to prevent the poor creature going to the workhouse. She is totally destitute and has no parish or friend that can be traced and is now at an asylum but the party who placed her there cannot continue the expense. Dr Conolly of your institution states a magistrate's order only instantly admits a patient without appeal to any parish in an extreme case such as this and without...(illegible)...Be kind enough to oblige me with the clause and the Act of Parliament which directs this...proceedings, for my opinion is that the patient would instantly die in a workhouse. I shall thank you to oblige me with the days of visiting and the hours. If possible please reply to this tomorrow and enclose your letter in a cover.

Post Script. Why I trouble you for the clause in the Act is that I cannot get the Magistrates to fall in with the idea.

Morrison evidently responded to this letter rather crossly, Conolly having set out fully the rules in several previous letters. The next day, Williams wearily apologises for his persistence. "My letter of yesterday was penned under strongly excited feelings and also after much fatigue and discussion with magistrates, vestry clerks and overseers". Conolly and Morrison must have sensed then that only they could sort out the *impasse* and immediately moved to acquire the necessary permissions to admit Caroline as a County patient. Morrison sent word to the Bethnal Green Guardians that they should arrange her transfer from the Asylum on the Green to Hanwell. The offer came too late. Caroline was by now too ill to be moved. The offer of a place remained open for the next six months but the Bethnal Green Clerk Britton eventually wrote to Morrison: "Ever since I received your last letter this patient has been so ill she could not be removed and you will see from the enclosed note from Mr Phillips Surgeon at Messrs Warburton and Co, Asylum on Bethnal Green, that she is no more."⁶¹⁶

If getting into the County Asylum was through a rigid line of narrow hoops, getting out was a somewhat more flexible affair. Wright points out that a surprisingly high proportion, between 40 and 60% of cases admitted to a series of six English asylums in the mid nineteenth century were discharged within a year.⁶¹⁷ Ellis confessed surprise at how many patients he was able to discharge cured or improved, given the chronic nature of their conditions⁶¹⁸ but Hanwell's discharge rate dropped with the

progressive accumulation of 'incurables'. By the 1840's, as few as 40 or 50 discharges were achieved per annum and practically no recent cases were admitted.

The Commissioners in Lunacy criticised the Middlesex magistrates for committing only incurables, believing the JP's were actively obstructing the admission of recent cases.⁶¹⁹ The magistrates had refused to sanction a multiple swap of several recent cases in Marylebone Workhouse for an equal number of incurables in Hanwell proposed by the Marylebone Board of Guardians. Opposition to this deal came largely from Conolly⁶²⁰ who discusses several times in his published works why long term patients deserved to stay in the Asylum and should not be moved to less well staffed institutions.⁶²¹ It was one area of disagreement between Conolly and the Commissioners in Lunacy. Conolly was tactfully diplomatic in expressing his views opposing the proposed Marylebone swap. "The general expectation of removal which would be created, the removal being known not to depend on recovery, would produce a general restlessness unfavourable to the comfort of the Asylum." Some patients would relapse and have to be returned, which would have an even more unfortunate effect on the patients. Conolly omitted to mention his belief that union workhouses were poorly staffed and incapable of providing a proper standard of care. The Marylebone swap had been approved in principle by the Metropolitan Commissioners, without the asylum officers or the Asylum Committee members having been consulted about the idea, generating a *frisson* of tension that was to characterise the ambivalent relationship between the Lunacy Commissioners and the Asylum.⁶²²

Visiting Justices could discharge patients from the Asylum, Guardians could discharge and the Commissioners in Lunacy also had the power to set patients at liberty, a power they used sparingly but sufficiently often, two or three times a year, to remind the Asylum the power existed. Patients' relatives sometimes offered to take the patient home but that required the sanction of the doctor and the Visiting Justices. In practice the asylum doctors recommended when a pauper was fit for discharge and readily intervened to stop discharges of which they disapproved.

Before Conolly's arrival, some Guardians discharged patients they thought they could manage in the workhouse but once Conolly was in post, it would be a brave union that discharged against his advice, his recommendations being quite firm. Begley followed his lead. Doysett, Hackney's Relieving Officer wanted Jabez Draper to be discharged. "The daughter of the above named patient, on account of his great improvement is desirous of having him home. If you have no objection, deliver him to the son...."⁶²³ Begley scribbled a memo to Morrison:

Draper is in the last stages of general paralysis and could not possibly live long. I think his removal unsuitable...it will lessen our number of deaths but will expedite the decease of the patient and therefore ought not to be acceded to if it can possibly be avoided.

Draper died in the Asylum. Similarly Conolly refused to sanction Whitechapel Union's removal to Ireland of a patient who was formerly a charge on the Union but was then a County patient for whom they had just received the permit to repatriate. "John Holland is not in a state to be removed to Ireland" ends the exchange decisively.⁶²⁴ The Asylum did agree to Sam Byles' suggestion that one of his Union patients, Mary Emmett should be removed back to the workhouse. Sam Byles being a regular visitor, perhaps the medical staff had more confidence in his judgment. Byles wanted to use the vacancy to transfer a patient currently in Armstrong's at Peckham.⁶²⁵

While Sam Byles was in the Asylum every 4-6 weeks visiting his patients, most union doctors were not, nor were other parish officers. The parish authorities were supposed to visit their paupers regularly, at a minimum once a year, to identify their lunatics and idiots for the statutory annual returns under the legislation of 1815.⁶²⁶ The variability of the parishes' visiting habits was a source of constant vexation to the Asylum staff: "serious inconvenience is occasioned at some seasons of the year for several weeks in succession by the visits of the Parochial Authorities for the purpose of seeing their patients."⁶²⁷ The Justices supported the notion that the Asylum should be as open and accessible as possible but:

They come at uncertain hours from ten in the morning to five in the afternoon. Sometimes several different parties come on the same day and occasionally they come

in parties of ten or twelve...The patients are collected hastily together....and are crowded into one room where they remain more than an hour with several attendants—all work, exercise and even regularity of meals being suspended.....The parish authorities generally go through all the wards and their appearance, especially when in numbers, is commonly productive of much noise and excitement.⁶²⁸

The Guardians of St George in the East were certainly guilty on at least one occasion of just such an unplanned visit, having decided on the spur of the moment one day to go *en masse* to visit their pauper lunatics instead of hold a formal Board meeting.⁶²⁹ The Lunacy Commissioners on the other hand criticised parish authorities for not visiting their pauper lunatics more frequently, observing the reluctance of parishes to visit paupers placed in asylums at great distance from the parish.⁶³⁰

The distance between the East End and Hanwell was merely an inconvenience for parish officers but had a far greater impact on relatives. Those who wished to keep in touch but were unable to visit frequently were obliged to write letters. Nine hundred or so letters survive from 1839 to 1845 from parish officers and patients' relatives to Morrison, Conolly and Begley. They catalogue the day to day concerns of the parish authorities and the practical administration of admissions, deaths, discharges and visiting arrangements. There are requests for admission, reminders that male or female vacancies are urgently required, notes about quarterly accounts, arrangements for the collection of bodies by relatives, enquiries as to whether relatives can be found to notify about deaths and discharges, questions about patients' property, searches for lost relatives and a multitude of minor matters.

Poignant notes describe families' distressing powerlessness to do anything practical for their deranged relative, many written in an ingratiating fearful tone, expressing relief for their relative's good fortune in getting a place. No one was complaining, indeed any minor criticism was so hedged around with courteous social pleasantries and humble apologies that all its force was lost. Many relatives, or 'friends', a word encompassing spouses, relatives and anyone with an informal as opposed to an official connection to the patient, had no hope of visiting at all. Mr Cropsman, from Homerton enquired about his daughter, Silvia. "My family has not been able to come and see her through great affliction and her mother and myself will feel greatly

obliged to you as her mother is labouring under a distress in her breast and feels very desirous to know about her".⁶³¹

Mary Holland, worried about her "poor husband", John:

I am so badly off that I am not able to go and see him. I am after a long illness. I wrote to Doctor Begley and got no answer therefore I have confidence in you that you will let me know if he is dead or alive. I beg for God sake of you to write me as soon as you can. If you would ask Doctor Begley about him he would tell you I [k]now that....⁶³²

Caroline Thomas in Limehouse was in a similarly difficult position.

My mind is very uneasy about my husband. I shall take it as a favour if you would enquire of Doctor Begley the State of my husband mind and if he think thair is aney hope of is recovery. I should have been to see him before this but oing to the situation I am placed in depriving me of coming over and my dear children are in the Union Workhouse Wapping your answer will greatly oblige.⁶³³

A note from Begley attached, to assist Morrison with his reply, simply states "Husband is better in mind as well as in body."⁶³⁴

Visiting times for relatives and friends were confined to Tuesdays and Fridays only, a three day gap which seemed a long time for relatives anxious to know how a new patient, suddenly removed from home, was progressing. Mrs Marshall wrote to Dr. Conolly:⁶³⁵

Pardon the liberty I take in writing to you so soon after the admission of my husband but my feelings has got the upper hand of me and I am unable to attend to my dutys in consequence of a seperation from him although I am extremely happy at the change and grateful to all that has had a hand in getting him into your happy Asylum and live in hopes of his sound recovery. A few lines from you sir about him will be a great favour and to say what hour Fridays is admission granted. Perhaps I have taken to great a liberty Sir in enclosing the note to my husband but I will not do so again I have not seal'd it and it will ease his mind.

Asylum officers were prepared to allow visiting on Sundays as a special dispensation to working men. JE Canham of Mile End Road wanted to visit on Sundays because "being in a little way of business which requires my constant attention I shall feel most thankful if you can indulge me. My visits will not be very frequent."⁶³⁶

Similarly Edward Tomkinson, of George Gardens, Bethnal Green, "I being a very poor man with a large family and to lose a day's work would be a great loss to me."⁶³⁷ The scribbled assent at the tops of these letters is in Conolly's own hand, suggesting that he personally agreed the departure from normal visiting times.

The letters are of course from those who wished to remain in touch. 'Out of sight, out of mind' must have been common enough as the years of absence rolled by. Mrs Hands' way was probably not unique. Thomas Hands, a 32yr old seaman from Ratcliff parish, was one of the first admissions to Hanwell in May, 1831. The parish case ledger and admission registers describe him as being continuously ill for six years, "cause unknown" but of "steady habits."⁶³⁸ He remained in Hanwell for twenty years. A panicky letter arrived addressed to the "Governor" from Mr Henry Woods, on 12 September 1843.

Under my present particular circumstances I am obliged to trouble you with this letter as I understand (very lately) that there is a person under your care in this Asylum of the name of Thomas Hands who have a wife now living but that she have passed as a widow for some years, under these circumstances I am placed in a very awkward situation and if you will be so kind as to let me know if such a person is or have been in the Asylum and how long back, you Sir will be rendering an unhappy Man one of the best of favours you can possibly confer upon a fellow Creature.

A scribble on the corner of the letter in Begley's scrawl notes "Ratcliff. ALIVE". Thomas Hands was liberated from Hanwell on 11 November 1851, "relieved."^{639 640}

The Opening of Colney Hatch Asylum

Psychiatry for the Poor, Hunter and Macalpine's classic account of Colney Hatch Asylum/Friern Hospital from 1851 to 1973⁶⁴¹ draws extensively on material in the Friern Hospital Archive and reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy. I have returned to original sources for material relating to patients and correspondence with union officers but rely heavily on their work for this account of the impact of the new Asylum on the parishes and unions in East London.

Hanwell had 900 patients by 1846 and was permanently full. There was a long wait for a place; about 10% annual 'turnover' of deaths and another 10% discharges freed up

beds that were immediately filled up with those who had been waiting longest, inevitably people who had long-term conditions. Asylums operated in a curious 'first in, last out' fashion, those that had been waiting longest being the physically fittest but mentally the most chronic, the earlier admissions being most likely to survive a long time. The longer the wait, the fitter the patients admitted and the longer they lived. Vacancies declined because the overall mortality rate dropped and eventually the asylum filled up with physically 'fit' but severely dependent chronic patients. This happened at Hanwell and eventually at Colney Hatch. Acute cases with short-term 'treatable' disorders either stayed temporarily in the care of the workhouse or if unmanageable were admitted immediately to a vacancy in a private asylum. By the late 1840's, Hanwell had tripled in size but the pool of truly 'available' beds was small.

The Middlesex Justices wanted to double the size of Hanwell again. Conolly objected; 2000 patients under one roof would jeopardise "individual patient care", Hanwell was too big already.⁶⁴² The Magistrates originally planned a new asylum right next door to Hanwell on a vacant piece of land.⁶⁴³ The Commissioners were adamant that a new, entirely separate asylum should be built, more convenient to the eastern metropolis.

On one matter the Commissioners and Conolly strongly disagreed. The Commissioners thought that Hanwell should be reserved for recent, potentially curable cases. The new asylum could be a cheaper establishment for the pliable, tractable chronic cases who required less specialist supervision; what they meant was 'required less staff'. "A patient in this state requires a place of refuge; but...the great expenses of a lunatic hospital are unnecessary".⁶⁴⁴ Conolly fought successfully for the principle that long term incurables should receive the same standard of environment and treatment as the recent 'curable' cases, fearing that separation would lead to neglect of the most vulnerable. This principle was upheld over the next ten years largely because of Conolly's vigilance and repeated rehearsal of his arguments. He usually succeeded in having his way although his views were unpopular with his Committee of Visitors.

Once it had been decided to build a second county asylum on a geographically separate site the Middlesex Justices agreed that it should be somewhere to the east of the County. From 1849 or thereabouts it was referred to in the Guardians' minutes as

“the eastern asylum”. The chosen site was in fact not in the east at all, as a cursory glance at a map of London will confirm. It is decidedly in the west but the land was available and the new Great Northern Railway was being constructed alongside it, which allowed for a special station to be planned to bring patients, visitors and supplies from King’s Cross. This was more convenient for eastern metropolitan parishes than Hanwell though not many miles shorter distance by road.^d

Conolly advised on the design for the 1000 bed institution, which had to be modified to accommodate the architectural flights of fancy of S W Daulkes, the winner of the design competition, the final plans being modified again to take 1200 patients. Light and air were Conolly's prescription; Daulkes' Italianate gothic windows were small, would not open properly and had to be bricked up only a year or two later. The site sloped away from the road, creating drainage problems and recurring problems of damp, made worse by the insistence of the Commissioners that only two stories should be built rather than the more economical three.

The exterior appearance was undoubtedly a success; the interior was cheap. The galleries were bleak, ill heated, poorly furnished, gloomy and worst of all, unfinished when the Committee of Visitors decided it was time to admit the first patients. The cost, which had been projected during the planning stages to be £150,000 had risen to nearly half a million and yet inside the whole place gave the impression of having been built on the cheap.

There was a massive transmigration of pauper lunatics from workhouses and private asylums to Colney Hatch after it opened in summer 1851 although the process was longer and more complex than had been foreseen by the Committee of Justices. The asylum needed to fill up the vacancies as fast as possible to keep the running cost revenue up. The new Asylum Clerk, Jeaffreson adopted an unfortunate tone of hectoring haste with the union clerks. He demanded that all lunatic paupers mentioned on the 1850 returns who were not at Hanwell, that is the new asylum's working list of

^d The new Great Northern Railway timetable for August 1851 from King’s Cross to Potters Bar via Hornsey and Colney Hatch is pasted in the front cover of the 1851 Committee of Visitors’ Minute Book (H12/CH/A1/5/1). There were 8 trains per day there and back, journey time 17-18mins, fares 4d, 6d or 8d depending on class, day return 50% extra.

candidates for admission, should be transferred on certain specified days, usually no more than a week's notice being given.⁶⁴⁵

The first letter to Bathurst, Stepney's successor to Baker, merely informed him that the asylum intended to "send for" all the male lunatics at Ratcliff, Mile End and Wapping and 33 female lunatics at Wapping on 17 July.⁶⁴⁶ Before Bathurst had time to consider this a further letter arrived saying that all those Stepney patients in private asylums should be sent on the following Tuesday and Friday between 11 and 3.00.⁶⁴⁷ Bathurst wrote to the five asylum proprietors Stepney contracted with to warn them that their patients would soon be moved but meanwhile it occurred to him that there was no provision in the new 1845 Acts for the transfer of certified patients from one asylum to another. The drafters of the Act had not envisaged more than one public asylum per County. He wrote for advice; meanwhile no one was moving. The Lunacy Commissioners agreed; there was no mechanism in the Act to enable a transfer. All the patients from private asylums must be formally discharged from one asylum, examined again by two medical men and then brought before a magistrate and re-certified with a 'direction' to Colney Hatch.⁶⁴⁸

There was consternation at Colney Hatch when they realised these cumbersome legal proceedings would apply also to patients from the eastern metropolitan unions at Hanwell. Indeed patients from other unions had been arriving illegally at Colney Hatch since 17 July the week before. The Committee of Visiting Justices hastily convened a meeting at the Asylum with all the local union clerks to sort out the mess.⁶⁴⁹ Bathurst was sympathetic to the asylum administrators; too few patients and costs would rise, leading to increased charges to unions. In order to move as many people as possible into the asylum quickly he brought back with him magistrates' orders which had conveniently been made available at the meeting for all those named on the Returns. He set about organising the necessary medical examinations, which legally should of course have been completed before the magistrates orders were signed but no-one was going to make a fuss; and warned Dr Nash at Wapping Workhouse that the 33 female lunatics would soon all be moved to Colney Hatch. He directed the Relieving Officers to set about the business of transferring all the patients

at Warburton's, Aubin's, Bryan's and Byas'. Sixty-six people were moved the same week. Over the next month or two, up to 135 patients per week were arriving at Colney Hatch, slowly filling up the vacancies. The paupers from Bethnal Green were all sent the same day in two omnibuses.⁶⁵⁰

Stepney Union generally complied with orders; it was in the Clerk's nature to be reasonable. This was not the case elsewhere. Jeaffreson's demanding letters generated considerable resistance in some union clerks. July, August and September were spent in parry and counter-parry; fruitless argument ensued about the suitability of certain named individuals thought by union officers to be amenable and easily managed in the workhouse but highly desired by the Asylum for filling spaces. Jeaffreson demanded Hackney send 9 from the workhouse. The workhouse master objected. The nine paupers "are perfectly harmless, employed advantageously, might be seriously damaged by removal". The Clerk suggested an alternative 6 currently in Bryan's, Armstrong's and Aubin's. This crossed with another from Jeaffreson offering a compromise on nine but unaccountably now asking for more "married women". Hackney decided to send half the numbers the Asylum wanted.⁶⁵¹ Whitechapel were ordered to send 23; the Guardians said there were only 12 suitable. They agreed to take these 12 before a magistrate; only 4 of them were ordered to Colney Hatch. Of 11 others Jeaffreson had named, "4 women are not insane but epileptic and of weak intellect, 4 are recovered and one is of weak intellect", "Ann Tweed is insane but not dangerous" and so was Mary Anne Orford.⁶⁵² The tug of war ended in a compromise with far fewer admissions agreed than Colney Hatch had originally expected.

By late August the Asylum Committee of Visitors were becoming anxious. Where were all the lunatics to come from to justify the size of the institution? And then there was the other problem of attracting sufficient staff to manage those they had already. A note of desperation crept into the Chairman Mr Benjamin Rotch's letter to the unions. "Send all male lunatics with least possible delay...remove them forthwith...send your list, we will send orders...[but] hold females, cannot recruit sufficient attendants...."⁶⁵³ Whatever the legal inconvenience, the Committee of Visitors decided they would have to encourage unions to transfer patients across to

Colney Hatch from Hanwell and also to stop admissions to Hanwell, which curiously were still being processed.⁶⁵⁴

There were paupers waiting in workhouses for a place in Hanwell on orders signed many months prior to the opening of Colney Hatch. There were paupers in western metropolitan unions who should have been admitted to Hanwell but ended up in Colney Hatch. The ludicrous situation arose that cases from the west were driven past the gates of Hanwell on a day's journey to Colney Hatch and eastern union officers were still making journeys to Hanwell.⁶⁵⁵ Part of the problem was the higher price charged by Colney Hatch over Hanwell. As soon as possible the cost of Colney Hatch was reduced below that of Hanwell to 8s 2d. The difference of tuppence ha'penny less a week was enough to encourage unions to favour Colney Hatch over Hanwell. The muddle over admissions was an administrative nightmare. It took the asylum officers and unions a decade at least to reallocate the patients to the correct asylum.

The movement of these 1000 people from institutions where they had lived for many months or years into a remote new institution, largely for the convenience of those charged with administering the total metropolitan system was the first mass trans-institutional shift in London. There had been movements of half a dozen or so paupers from one institution to another during the early nineteenth century and in January 1851 over 100 pauper lunatics were moved from the private Haydock Lodge in Lancashire to the new Rainhill County Asylum for south Lancashire.⁶⁵⁶ When Hanwell opened the patients were admitted two or three at a time, at most a handful, but never before had patient shifts been organised on such a large scale as on the opening of Colney Hatch.

Between 1850 and 1852, the private licensed houses suffered a reduction in their 'market share' of the County of Middlesex pauper lunatic business from 37% to just under 8% (See Figure 6.1 below, p206).⁶⁵⁷

The improved access to a county asylum lasted no more than a year or two. Even though 40% or so (169 of 354) male admissions to Colney Hatch in 1852 had been ill for less than six months, the early "discharged cured" rate was low (11.8%). Deaths among new admissions was high (15%) and another 5% of patients were taken home

at the request their 'friends'. Nevertheless there was insufficient movement to stop the asylum silting up with chronic cases.⁶⁵⁸

Figure 6.1: General Summary Returns of Pauper Lunatics in Middlesex 1850-1852, 1851 figures collected six months after the opening of Colney Hatch CLA, from Appendix 6, 2nd Annual Report of the Committee of Visitors.

	1850	1851	1852
Total	2144	2234	2432
Hanwell	828	825	838
Colney Hatch	-	905	1087
Workhouse	524	366	342
Licensed House	792	166	

Within five years the Licensed Houses were back in the Middlesex pauper lunatic business in a big way, expanding to cater for the increasing demand. Colney Hatch was increased in size to 2000 places in the next decade and still the demand rose. A leap-frogging cycle of feast and famine in the London private pauper trade was managed by increasing their share of the fee-paying middle class patients and advertising further afield in counties and boroughs still without an asylum.

Nearly half (196) the first 400 male admissions to Colney Hatch came from licensed houses, 47 (12%) were from workhouses (a half of these were from the parish of Marylebone's own 'licensed' workhouse), 48 were from Hanwell, a handful came from St Luke's Hospital and Bethlem, 20 from other County Lunatic Asylums (most from Kent and Surrey) and 68 arrived directly from home.⁶⁵⁹

Some Boards of Guardians discussed the likely impact on patients and their families of the proposed move to Colney Hatch although the detail of the minutes is not sufficient to assess the strength of feeling. Patients views were not recorded. When the Hackney Clerk was arguing with Jeffreason over the number of patients the Union would send, their battle of wills culminating in a change of allocated date for transferring the workhouse lunatics, the Clerk refused to comply with the suggested new arrangements. The patients were already anxious and distressed about the forthcoming

move and the Guardians did not think it was fair to upset them further by an unnecessary change of date.⁶⁶⁰ This incident is a reminder that the Guardians and their clerks were in daily contact with paupers seeking relief, they knew many of the families over many years; decisions about committals and removals were taken on a case by case basis. They held their meetings in boardrooms attached to workhouses, the clerk would 'know' individual characters.

The parishes lost a degree of control over the shape of services for 'dangerous' lunatics when Hanwell opened, but the birth of Colney Hatch substantially eroded the element of choice left to them. The establishment of the Metropolitan Asylums Board in 1867 then effectively destroyed the potential for local initiative and the possibility of planning with patients' and their families' preferences in mind. From 1851 the Committees responsible for making planning decisions about the care of the majority of lunatics in London were geographically removed and personally remote from the people for whom the decisions were made. The Middlesex Magistrates' Committees of Asylum Visitors did not know the patients. The Metropolitan Asylums Board did not know the patients. Although there was one Guardian from each of the unions on the Board who theoretically brought the perspective of their locality to the table, this provided only a tenuous connection between paupers and princes.

The Lunacy Commission approved the transmigration of 1000 souls to Colney Hatch although they thought the final number on opening of 1200 was too large. The new public asylum would be able to take all-comers and particularly the recent onset, potentially curable cases. It was satisfying to note the movement of so many pauper patients out of the clutches of the private sector and into a public asylum.⁶⁶¹ It seems doubtful that the patients were so pleased. The thirty two wards leading off 6 miles of corridor had walls of unplastered whitewashed brick; floors were of uncovered brick, stone or asphalt (this latter stuff was called Lava; a disaster from the start as it absorbed urine and stank). The sanitary facilities were minimal but better than was available in most workhouses of the day. On the other hand the 140 acres provided space for a farm and extensive gardens and opportunities for "energetic employment" which prevented "the deranged mind dwelling on its erroneous imaginations".⁶⁶² From 1852 there were also unusually good opportunities for patients to meet patients of the

opposite sex in the 600 seat mixed dining hall, one of Dr Tyerman's suggestions for using the central indoor hall that continued until 1869 and at the fortnightly dances and other amusements.^e

Pauper patients transferred from eastern metropolitan workhouses must also have been surprised at the numbers of paid attendants. There were 15 senior and 25 ordinary male attendants for 523 men, matron, deputy matron and 49 female attendants for 735 women, a staffing ratio of 1:13 which compared well with other public county asylums. It was remarkably generous staffing compared with metropolitan workhouse infirmaries, which at this date rarely employed more than one paid nurse for 3-400 sick or infirm patients but made do with untrained and unpaid pauper women inmates working under the direction of the Matron. About one quarter of the cost was attributable to salaries when the asylum opened (2s), rising to one third over the next 20 years.

The first admissions were documented in detail by the first two medical officers, Charles Hood^f and J G Davey^g in their annual report to the Committee of Visitors⁶⁶³ and subsequent reports followed their style. Hunter and Macalpine cover the clinical characteristics of the early patients in some depth, the expected mix of chronic mania, paralysis, epilepsy, intemperance, melancholy. What stands out from the admission case-books is what poor physical condition many patients were in; bed-sores, "dirty habits", lung disease and skin disease being the most frequent entries. The 15% mortality rate for new admissions is high for a population of people whose average age was about 40, about 50% higher than the equivalent figure for Hanwell. The most likely explanation, the one espoused by Chairman Benjamin Rotch, was that the patients had arrived from private houses and workhouses in a debilitated state because the most unwell were the first to be moved from those institutions by their parishes.⁶⁶⁴ There is no direct evidence from the parish records that this was so. It is possible that

^e The Central Hall at Colney Hatch now houses a health club and swimming pool for the Princess Park apartments

^f **Charles Hood** only stayed a year before becoming medical superintendent of Bethlem

^g **Davey** had been an assistant to Conolly at Hanwell but had spent several years as Medical Superintendent of the Government Asylum in Ceylon. He also stayed only a year at Colney Hatch, leaving to set up his own private asylum, Northwoods, near Bristol.

conditions at Colney Hatch also played some part; it was a cold, dampish place not calculated to raise the spirits of the inmates.

Colney Hatch quickly silted up with chronic cases and only two years after it opened 268 patients were turned away. By 1869 the Commissioners were complaining that of the 5000 pauper lunatics enumerated in the Middlesex Annual Returns, 2200 were “unprovided for”, that is in private licensed houses in London and the provinces, remote county asylums at Hayward’s Heath and North Riding of Yorkshire, in workhouses or at home. Later in the century chronicity was seen as the inevitable outcome of most lunacy, so long-stay patients were accepted as legitimate if not prized inmates. Yellowlees went so far as to suggest that long-stay patients “were vital to give the newcomers the necessary example of industry, order and obedience”.⁶⁶⁵ In the late 1850’s the imperative of offering a curative opportunity to recent cases was still dominant.

Colney Hatch was not the solution the Justices and Guardians expected it to be. More or less the same proportion of notified lunatics were maintained in workhouses in 1860 (25%) as in 1842 (28%).⁶⁶⁶ The private licensed houses mopped up the excess and the Middlesex Magistrates began to ruminate about a third County Lunatic Asylum. The Metropolitan Poor Act and the rise of the Metropolitan Asylums Board effectively blighted the development of the third asylum until the mid-1870s.

Chapter 7: Central Regulation: the Lunacy Commissioners and the Guardians, 1845-67.

Every Thursday afternoon in the late 1840's, the four workhouse masters and Mrs Megson attended the Stepney Board of Guardians' meeting at the union offices in Ratcliff Workhouse to report on the week's unusual and untoward events. Mrs Megson was wont to boast of the visitors from various Christian Missions who had been enticed to spend time with the inmates at Wapping, to register her complaints about the shoddy quality of the linen supplied for bedding and shrouds and press her case for maintenance works and new apartments more suited to her charges.⁶⁶⁷ The inevitable scuffles and quarrels of institutional life were owned up to and any special cases reported. Lunatics who required certifying and removal to an asylum were mentioned because one of the Relieving Officers would have to request the attendance of a medical practitioner not employed directly by the parish to make the appropriate recommendation.

In short, life in the Stepney workhouses continued much as it had for the past ten years. The Poor Law Commission had been transmogrified into the Poor Law Board in 1848 but with no visible change of pace or relationship with the Guardians. The deluge of central instructions flowed as before. Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall from Somerset House was just as demanding as his predecessors. The main pressure on the Stepney workhouse masters was the inexorable growth in the numbers of paupers. Institutions which had housed 3-400 inmates in the mid-1830's now held double or treble that number. To contain the rising demand in the East End, most unions made alterations and expansions or built new larger workhouses but they never seemed to keep up with the inward flow.⁶⁶⁸ By 1857 many eastern metropolis workhouses contained over 1000 paupers; some unions like Stepney had several expanding workhouses.

Green has described the deep pit of inefficiency that the East London unions dug for themselves from 1849 through the 1850s and 60s as their policies on poor relief diverged from other parts of the country.^{669 670} Apart from Poplar, where the Guardians still relied heavily on outdoor relief, indoor relief as a proportion of total

expenditure was consistently higher in London than other regions whilst outdoor relief was lower. Their ready willingness to implement the workhouse test tied them irrevocably into an expensive and inappropriate system of poor relief for unemployed labourers and their families, who grew ever more numerous during the economic recession of the late 1840s. Green traces the adoption of a strict indoor relief policy in the poorer metropolitan districts to the desperation of the Guardians during the recession of the 1850s, faced with a tide of paupers they could not cope with. Geographical social segregation between rich and poor classes which characterised the metropolis as a result of inner urban slum clearance resulted in poorer unions restricting spending in a narrow doctrinaire fashion.⁶⁷¹

There were other visitors to the workhouses besides Commissioners and clergymen. Charles Dickens visited Mrs Megson's workhouse at Wapping twice, once in early May 1850 and then a decade later in early 1860.⁶⁷² Dickens decided to visit after reading a newspaper account of Wapping workhouse in which "an Eastern metropolis Magistrate said there is no classification in the Wapping Workhouse" and "it was a disgrace and a shame and divers other hard names and because I wished to see how the fact really stood. Eastern police magistrates are not always the wisest men in the East". He arrived at the workhouse unexpected and unknown.

A very bright and nimble little Matron with a bunch of keys in her hand responded to my request to see the House. I began to doubt whether the police magistrate was quite right in his facts when I noticed her quick active little figure and her intelligent eyes. The Traveller, the Matron intimated, should see the worst first. He was welcome to see everything.

They went straight to the "foul wards". The "wretched rooms" of the infirmary and foul wing "were as clean and sweet as it is possible for such rooms to be; they would be a pest house in a single week if they were ill kept". Dickens "accompanied the brisk matron up another barbarous staircase into a better kind of loft devoted to the idiotic and imbecilic". Two old women and other inmates there seemed well cared for. In the refractory wards he notes a lively bantering exchange between the Matron and her noisy young women charges. Dickens understood Mrs Megson's problems; he could see that given the dilapidated building, the thousands of pounds that would be

required to bring it up to standard and the numbers of people in need, that the care of these paupers was reasonably good. "As I shook hands with the nimble matron at the gate, I told her I thought Justice had not used her very well and that the wise men of the East were not infallible".

At the Stepney Board meeting on the 7th June 1849, the Masters reported that the new Commissioners in Lunacy had visited for the first time. Mr Gaskell and Mr Mylne had visited three of the four workhouses that week.⁶⁷³ The two gentlemen had inspected all the rooms, "examined the idiots, lunatics and insane persons" and made a report on all three houses in the visitors' book at Ratcliff Workhouse. Mrs Megson seized the opportunity to point out to the Board that the Commissioners had declared "the Building known as the foul ward is not a proper place for lunatics". This having been the subject of her many complaints and suggestions in the past must have been a satisfying moment. Sick and destitute old women, syphilitic worn out prostitutes and scabby infected derelicts were all squashed in to the same old wards as the female lunatics at Wapping Workhouse, suitable neither as an infirmary nor as dormitories for the fit, "a kind of purgatory" Dickens thought.⁶⁷⁴ The Chairman Thomas Fry asked for the Commissioners' full report to be read out.

(Visit to Ratcliff on 4 June '49). These paupers were at the time seen were with a few exceptions tranquil and comfortable and were generally speaking tractable and harmless. In the house at Wapping however the Commissioners found the females named Frances Middlemore who was in a great state of maniacal excitement and was in a strait waistcoat and Eliza Wells and Frances Brown, both of whom were in a state of melancholia and under delusions who might in their judgement to be removed without delay to a lunatic asylum and if Martha Thompson were to bear removal which however may be doubted, as she is apparently in a very feeble state and is paralysed a similar step would be advisable in her case.

A large portion of the Idiotic in that workhouse are placed among the invalids in the outbuilding or as it is termed the foul ward, a building which in point of construction and arrangement is wretchedly ill adapted for the reception and accommodation either for the sick or the imbecile and idiotic, many of whom are subject to epilepsy.

The accommodation provided for the idiotic and imbecile at Mile End Workhouse is somewhat better although it is still extremely defective. Of the paupers whom the Commissioners examined at the latter house, L.J. Tilson might be removed to a lunatic

asylum and the same course ought probably be taken with Henry Harrison and also with Daniel Connor and William Hunt should they be found not to improve in their present situation.

The Board directed the Relieving Officers to look into the cases mentioned and make transfer arrangements if necessary. The new Commissioners were going to cost them money. The very same week the Poor Law Board had sent an inspection team round all the Stepney Houses to check on the ventilation systems, which the Guardians knew were defective; that was going to cost them money too. They had no money for upgrading the foul wards and Mrs Megson was still battling to get some improvements when Dickens visited a decade later.

The Crystallisation of Central Regulation

The two 1845 Acts of Parliament engineered by Lord Ashley and steered by him through the Commons ushered in the machinery for the creation of comprehensive public provision of care and the central national inspectorate with the responsibility but only modest powers to regulate and maintain standards. The Lunatics Asylums and Pauper Lunatics Act⁶⁷⁵ imposed on County and Borough magistrates the obligation to establish Lunatic Asylums for pauper lunatics. The Lunatics Act⁶⁷⁶ established the Lunacy Commission with wide-ranging set of tasks in relation to the confinement, care and discharge of detained lunatics of all classes in every type of public and private institution but also the job of overseeing the implementation of the Asylums Act, a task for which they were equipped with few powers except that of persuasion.

The time was right for parliament to support the creation of a central inspectorate. Mellett 1981⁶⁷⁷ discusses the creation of the Commission within the context of changing conceptions of the role of government, the development of a central administrative bureaucracy and the rise of supervisory central agencies designed to oversee and 'police' the implementation of central government policy through local government.

The central regulatory system is usually dated to 1833 when the Factory Inspectorate was established. *The Times* leader of 21 September 1833 pronounced this new system contained “the seeds of mighty changes”. Although the Editor was “no enthusiast” for central regulation, an inspectorate offered advantages “if inspectors or visitors of strong capacity, of enlightened humanity and moral courage” were appointed.⁶⁷⁸ The desirability of central control of the management of lunacy had been mooted at least a century earlier. Defoe^a expressed his forthright views in his essay “The True Born Englishman”.⁶⁷⁹

In my humble Opinion all private Mad-Houses should be suppress’d at once, and it should be no less than Felony to confine any Person under pretence of Madness without due Authority. For the cure of those who are really Lunatick, licens’d Mad-Houses should be constituted in convenient Parts of the Town, which houses should be subject to proper Visitation and Inspection, nor should any Person be sent to a Mad-House without due Reason, Inquiry and Authority.

His views attracted some sympathy⁶⁸⁰ but it was another forty years before the 1774 Act for Regulating Madhouses gave the Royal College of Physicians the duty to appoint 5 Visiting Physicians with the narrow remit to license and inspect the metropolitan private madhouses. Outside the Metropolitan area the County Justices were the licensing body. Since medieval times there had been statutes, the Chancery laws, for the control of lunatics’ property but the Visiting Physicians constituted the first central inspectorate to oversee the environment and circumstances of confinement. Their limited remit was determined largely by the public fear of unwarranted confinement by the articulate classes rather than by concerns about the conditions in which the ‘truly mad’ were confined.⁶⁸¹ The laxity of the Physicians’ visitations was notorious; many of them were close personal and professional acquaintances of the proprietors. They took little trouble to undertake a thorough examination of the premises, their reports were often one line: “House in satisfactory state”.^b

^a **Defoe** (c1660-1730) lived at Newington Green and then in Church Street, Stoke Newington village, now part of Hackney.

^b **Nicoll** imagined a visit to the White House by the Visiting Physicians: “Let us land our three Commissioners, with their attendant secretary at the door of the White House. Doctor A insists Doctor B shall enter first. Doctor B can’t think of it. Whilst they are bowing at each other on the steps, half a dozen manoeuvres are practised to screen the patients from view. The apothecary perhaps detains

Nevertheless the 1774 Act was a landmark in that it obliged proprietors to keep a register of patients, allowed inspection and in theory subjected the decision to confine to independent medical opinion. A medical certificate was required for confinement of paying patients in a private madhouse, but not for the confinement of pauper lunatics, who were governed by the 1744 statutes until the new certification procedures were introduced in 1828.

The supine physicians' toothless watchdog was replaced by the fifteen member Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy as a result of the 1828 Madhouses Act.⁶⁸² The five physicians were supplemented with five magistrates and five gentlemen, a number the Recorder of York, SJ Nicoll thought "too extensive for personal responsibility".⁶⁸³ It was not their number that appears in retrospect to be defective so much as their attitude. As Nicoll commented, "no new stimulus, no new motive, no new intelligence". Their reports were as brief and self-satisfied in the early days as their predecessors; they rarely refused a licence. They became influential after Lord Ashley joined them. By 1840 Ashley and his parliamentary colleague Lord Robert Somerset were interpreting the legal responsibilities of the Metropolitan Commissioners more widely as having advisory oversight over the provincial justices.⁶⁸⁴ These two Commissioners got permission to extend their visitatorial powers to provincial asylums; their resulting 1844 Report⁶⁸⁵ stamped a new style, a new tone, a new authority on the Commission's activities and led to the establishment of the national Commissioners in Lunacy in 1845.

them for five minutes in the lobby, with some pretty well-devised story; offers Doctor C a pinch of his snuff and accepts the doctor's box in return. At length the stairs are ascended. At the first landing Doctor B is asked how Lady Betty goes on; stops to detail her case and hears Lord John's in return. At last the gallery is attained. The doors fly open. Doctor A peeps his head over his shoulder to the right. Doctor B adopts the same measure to the left. They see nothing wrong, for they scarce see anything at all. Meanwhile Doctor C and the secretary are conning over some dispute at the College...I will not literally insist that the doctors will act precisely thus; but I must insist that this sketch forms a pretty accurate resemblance...." Nicoll SJ 1828 *An Inquiry into the Present state of Visitation in Asylums for the Reception of the Insane and into the Modes by Which Such Visitation might be Improved*. London. pp 79-89

The new Commission was small, six professional full-time inspectors— three lawyers and three doctors, supplemented by up to five honorary Commissioners.²²⁷ They were supported by a full time secretary at a salary scale of £800-£1000, which contrasts well with the £300 paid to Baker, the highest paid Guardians' officer. The Secretary was assisted by a trio of clerks. Squashed into inadequate offices in Spring Gardens, this small band had some difficulty coping with the rapidly growing volume of paperwork generated by the Annual Returns. Additional business was thrust on them as time went by. The Chairman, Ashley (he became Shaftesbury in 1851) was keen however for the Commission to remain small, essential he declared, to the spirit of collaboration and harmony.⁶⁸⁶ Perhaps he also realised that he could better maintain control of Commission policy with a few close cronies. Attracting like-minded people and keeping them was essential to cultivating the Spring Gardens ethos. Between 1845 and 1900 only 28 professional men occupied six positions and over the whole presided the permanent chairman, who died 'in harness' in 1885 after 50 unbroken years of service first with the Metropolitan and then with the national Commissioners in Lunacy.

Lunacy Commission Policy on Workhouses

The visits to Stepney were the last of the first programme of Commission visits to workhouses. The same year they also visited the workhouse at Bethnal Green although there is no reference to this in the Guardians' minutes, nor to their return visit to the Union in the year 1850-51. When the Commissioners began work in 1845, they gave priority to the private licensed houses, lunatic hospitals and the fifteen County and Borough Asylums. But at the beginning of 1848 they decided to begin the enormous task of inspecting the lunatic wards of the several hundred workhouses and identifying and examining all pauper lunatics and idiots. They had heard repeated complaints from asylums and hospitals of the deplorable physical condition in which some paupers arrived at the asylum. They were well aware that Guardians kept many pauper lunatics and idiots in workhouses by choice. The official Annual Returns of Lunatics gave an indication of the number of more obvious cases kept in each house but the Commissioners had no idea of the accuracy of these Returns. If they were to be successful in pressing for the rapid creation of more county asylums and the

closure of the private houses then they had to persuade the Guardians of the unsuitability of their current provision. Between June 1848 and June 1849 the Commission visited 248 workhouses.⁶⁸⁷

Workhouse visits were conducted in the usual Commission manner by two Commissioners, one medical (in Stepney's case Sam Gaskell) and one legal (in Stepney James Mylne). It was a mammoth task. Urban workhouses contained several hundred paupers. The Poor Law Commission had issued an order in 1845 banning Bethnal Green Guardians from squeezing in more than 1016 people in their already overcrowded House and all the Stepney Houses except Ratcliff, the rather classier, well-built infirmary house, had six to seven hundred inmates. Visits were of necessity relatively short; a cursory look around all the wards and a brief conversation with the patients identified by the Master or Matron as appropriate for their attention was all that could be managed in the half a day allocated for each visit. Not all the Commissioners were as thorough as Gaskell and Mylne. When Thomas Turner⁶⁸⁸ and William Campbell visited Hackney Workhouse in 1850 they merely left a note in the Visitors Book saying "They were all in a tranquil state and no-one was under mechanical restraint. The house was clean and in good order."⁶⁸⁹

The Lunacy Commissioners were mindful that workhouses came under a separate government jurisdiction. Their reports to the County Justices about conditions in public asylums were longer, more detailed and certainly more critical than their reports to the Poor Law Commission (from 1848 Poor Law Board) about 'their' workhouses. While the two central boards ostensibly had similar aims as far as lunatics were concerned and in public at least they made sure they appeared to be of one mind, politely backing each other's orders, relations between the two bodies were not quite so harmonious as the pleasantries suggest. The Poor Law Board was there to concern itself above all else with the management of the able-bodied unemployed poor. The sick, infirm and medically incompetent were a complication to be dealt with but something of a side issue in the great national scheme to reduce pauperism. The Lunacy Commission on the other hand began their task steeped in Ashley's

evangelical ethos of a public duty to care and cure. Lunatics were deserving of the best conditions that could be afforded, for humanity's sake.

From 1845-8, before the Poor Law Commission was disbanded and Chadwick was ousted from his job, these two divergent philosophies could be accommodated in Somerset House and Spring Gardens. Chadwick personally saw no dissonance between his policy on the unemployed able poor and the need to provide for the dependent sick poor. Curiously, though Chadwick and Ashley had almost nothing in common except a disposition to frantic overwork, passionate zeal to get things done, a predisposition to meddle and a tendency to take offence, they admired and respected each other. They remained lifelong friends after working together at the ill-fated Board of Health from 1848-1854.^{690 c}

It was all very well for these two key people at the top of their respective administrations to believe there were no differences in objectives between poor law sick policies and the Lunacy Commission's aims but in practice the poor law philosophy was impossible to deliver consistently. The harsh treatment imposed on the idle workless enveloped all paupers in those unions of a particularly unforgiving disposition. In the late 1840's there was scandal after scandal reported by a hostile press about the wretched inhumanity of workhouse conditions. (The Andover Workhouse scandal, in which starving pauper inmates were reduced to gnawing the bones they were tasked to grind, broke in 1846.⁶⁹¹)

Responsible Boards of Guardians tried to steer a difficult course between the parallel tracks of poor law policy for the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving'. Relieving officers and workhouse masters were reducing the comforts of paupers to comply with their interpretation of 'less eligibility'. At the same time they were expected to be generous 'overseers' of the needy sick, ensuring medical help was available to all, provide comfortable infirmary wards and kindness to the sick and dying. The two groups of

^c During the cholera epidemic of 1848 Chadwick, Ashley and the physician on the Board, Southwood Smith worked daily together for several weeks. Chadwick, exhausted, succumbed to fever himself and Ashley stayed in the office for 48 hours continuously to cover his work. "But for the gallantry of Lord

able-bodied and non-able-bodied overlapped to such a degree that it was difficult in practice to draw a clear distinction between them even though on paper they appeared quite separate.

The Lunacy Commission had no such dilemma. They were concerned only with the Guardians' humanitarian responsibilities. From 1845-8, Lunacy Commissioners took care not to tread on the sensibilities of their colleagues in the Poor Law Commission. If the Lunacy Commissioners were zealously critical of conditions in workhouses, there must be an implication that the Poor Law Commission had not been carrying out their own inspectorial function competently. References to the poor law institutions in the Commissioners' first Annual reports are remarkably bland given the factual description of conditions the Commissioners found on their visits.

The paupers in workhouses who are labouring under insanity of an active form or of recent origin are comparatively very few; and in these cases the guardians have in general been found well-disposed and ready of their own accord to take the necessary steps for their speedy transfer to a lunatic asylum.⁶⁹²

When the Commissioners encountered violent lunatics however "we have never failed to interfere and insist upon immediate removal of the parties".

The Lunacy Commissioners and the Poor Law Board

Relations between the Lunacy Commission and the new Poor Law Board established in 1848 began amicably enough.⁶⁹³ The Commissioners found 54 people they thought sufficiently violent to warrant removal, concentrated in 32 workhouses, including Mile End and Wapping. "The Poor Law Board have always zealously co-operated with us to ensure this object has been effected".⁶⁹⁴ A lack of suitable asylum places available for the transfer of lunatics out of workhouse wards imposed a degree of caution on the Commissioners in recommending too many transfers. They complained repeatedly about the lack of recent cases being sent to the new public asylums and their filling up with incurables. It was hardly consistent then to insist on the transfer of long-standing cases unless there were statutory reasons for doing so.

Ashley we must have been brought to a standstill". (Letter Chadwick to Phipps 1st Feb 1850 quoted

The two inspectorates maintained a united public front but became increasingly frustrated with the other's attitude. As the Poor Law Board assumed more direct responsibility and executive powers over the Boards of Guardians, they became more sensitive to the Guardians' desire to run the pauper management machine as cheaply as the local rate payers wanted. There was nothing special about lunatics as far as the Poor Law Inspectors could see that justified the extra expense that was invested in them as a result of the Lunacy Acts. The workhouses were full of seriously physically sick paupers who did not receive the benefit that lunatics did in separate expensive asylums. Furthermore, the County Asylums were under the control of the County Magistrates and even though the rate-payers paid for them, the Guardians had little influence over costs. There were moreover thousands of harmless lunatics and imbeciles in workhouses cared for perfectly well alongside other paupers and the Lunacy Commissioners had rarely complained to unions about their care when they visited—surely conditions could not be all that bad?

None of this was put into plain words until the Select Committee hearings of 1859 and 60 but there is enough in the correspondence to suggest that there was simmering resentment by the Poor Law Authority of the moral superiority assumed by the Lunacy Commissioners for several years before that.⁶⁹⁵ The Poor Law Board were getting a taste of the medicine which they had been ladling out for years to the Guardians and naturally found it unpalatable.

The minutes and memoranda of the Lunacy Commissioners and the Poor Law Board must be among some of the worst written minutes ever compiled. The Lunacy Commission minutes in particular only record the agenda items discussed and not the issue under consideration or the decision.^d But from 1854, when there was a minor

Finer SE 1952 *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* London Methuen, 349)

^d Lunacy Commission minutes go like this: "Mr Gaskell raised the matter relating to Bethnal House. It was resolved to write to the parish officer concerned..." or "The Commissioners requested the Secretary to write to Mr Lumley [PLB] about the matter before them...." The minute books go on in this vein for 30 years. They are useless as a record of decisions. Did Shaftesbury never want to recall what had been decided earlier?

skirmish between the two Secretaries about which Commission should be responsible for ensuring the Annual Lunatic Returns were properly filled in by the union clerks and medical officers, the tone of letters between them became more strained.⁶⁹⁶

The Poor Law Board was anxious to exclude the meddlesome Lunacy Commissioners from its territory and certainly to block any moves that Commissioners might make to extend their powers further over lunatics and idiots in workhouses. The Poor Law Board's lack of sympathy for special treatment of lunatics came over powerfully in the Select Committee hearings on Lunatics in 1859 when Andrew Doyle, their Inspector from the North-West spoke for the Board. He was willing to challenge directly Shaftesbury's evidence to the Committee. He expressed the opinion that it should be possible to detain lunatics formally in workhouses and further that the poor law inspectors were quite as capable as Lunacy Commissioners of supervising their care.⁶⁹⁷ Shaftesbury must have regretted the low-key 'softly, softly' approach which they had taken in their early reports about workhouses. It certainly made it difficult for him to back up his opinion that there was much cruelty and thoughtless treatment of chronic lunatics and idiots in workhouses and that their treatment was detrimental to their health and wellbeing. Doyle's raw attack on Lunacy Commission policy to get lunatics out of workhouses into asylums stung Shaftesbury into a more frank criticism of the quality of Poor Law Board supervision of their institutions. The final report from Sir George Grey's Committee leaned to Shaftesbury's view but that did nothing to foster harmony between the two inspectorates. From 1860 on, the Poor Law Board began their campaign to by-pass the Lunacy Commissioners by establishing asylums under their own control for the class of chronically insane patients that posed such a heavy nursing burden on their workhouses. Gathorne-Hardy's Metropolitan Poor Bill of 1867, which established the Metropolitan Asylums Board was the triumphal march of the Poor Law Board over the dispirited Lunacy Commissioners.

Shaftesbury was frustrated by the Commissioners lack of direct powers to change conditions in workhouses and envied the Poor Law Board their modest powers. His views were succinctly expressed to Poplar Guardians in 1862 when Joseph Biggs, one

of Poplar's 85 patients at Colney Hatch was murdered by strangling by another patient. Poplar Guardians' own investigation concluded that the management of the Asylum was defective. They drafted a 'Memorial' to petition Sir George Grey to the effect that County Asylums should all be managed under one central Supervisory Board, either by the Commissioners in Lunacy or by a Board comprising some Magistrates and also representatives of the Guardians. They sent a copy to Shaftesbury, who responded to the Memorialists with wholehearted agreement.⁶⁹⁸ From 1860 the Lunacy Commission rarely commented on institutions under poor law jurisdiction in their Annual Reports although they continued to send weekly reports of their visits to the Poor Law Office. The hundreds of identical covering letters have survived but the enclosures have not! ⁶⁹⁹

Parish lunatic houses and wards

The Commission took a pragmatic line on special lunatic wards in workhouses, like the one Stepney had set up in the late 1830's at Wapping. This had become a general infirmary 'foul ward' by 1849 whereas in many districts, such wards had become more specialised. "There are now a considerable number of workhouses in which separate apartments or buildings, termed Idiot or Lunatic Wards, have been fitted up expressly for paupers of that class."⁷⁰⁰ They employed special attendants, the inmates were allowed a more liberal diet and "in some respects they are similar to ordinary lunatic asylums". The Commission was doubtful whether these places were 'legal' but thought it right to visit them more frequently than ordinary workhouse wards.

Workhouse patients designated as lunatics have often been characterised as harmless imbeciles, chronically but quietly mad or decrepit old demented. Workhouses are portrayed, not least by Dickens, as stultifying 'waiting' rooms filled with a "heterogeneous mass of physical and mental wrecks" queuing for their removal to a place in the ever-expanding county asylum system or death.⁷⁰¹ After 1863, when workhouses were sanctioned for harmless chronic cases, those on the way in to the Asylum were housed with the displaced burnt-out chronic wrecks on the way out, extruded to make room for the more desirable 'recent cases'. Scull describes the characters that populate the borderlands of the state of lunacy:⁷⁰²

Chronic alcoholics afflicted with delirium tremens or, with permanently pickled brains, reduced to a state of dementia; epileptics; tertiary syphilitics; consumptives in the throes of terminal delirium; cases of organic brain damage...the malnourished, the simple-minded.

Certainly those that remained in the workhouse in the longer term seem to have fitted this description in the early years after the Lunatics Act of 1845.⁷⁰³ Bartlett pointed out recently however that by 1861 the Lunacy Commissioners recognised that in many workhouses with designated lunatic wards, "The class of patients found in these wards differs little, if at all, from those met in County Asylums".^{704 705} The workhouse infirmary had a key role as a diagnostic 'station stop' for a diverse assortment of cases brought in by the relieving officers and parish doctors for assessment and classification. About 15% of infirmary admissions in East London were suffering primarily from mental disorder, a hefty chunk of the doctor's workload.⁷⁰⁶

The Metropolitan Commissioners' 1844 survey had identified several parishes and Unions that subcontracted part of their workhouse or a separate building as a private licensed house solely for the benefit of their own paupers.⁷⁰⁷ Parts of the workhouses at Morda, near Oswestry in Shropshire, at Stoke Demarel, near Plymouth and at the House of Industry at Kingsland, near Shrewsbury were licensed and the whole of Carisbrooke house described as 'a Licensed Workhouse'.⁷⁰⁸ In the Metropolitan area, St Marylebone parish owned their own licensed house, which they contracted out to a Messrs Gillam and Whelan on the understanding that all the parish pauper lunatics would be accommodated at an agreed rate.⁷⁰⁹

Bethnal Green Guardians gave serious consideration to setting up their own lunatic asylum wards in a separate building in 1846, as an indirect consequence of the 1845 Acts. John Warburton must have thought, as his father had during the 1827 Select Committee hearings, that the erection of county lunatic asylums would rapidly ruin his business. James Phillips, surgeon at the Asylum on the Green, wrote to all East End unions in October 1845 to inform them that the weekly charge was going up by a shilling to 11s, "in consequence of the recent Act of Parliament whereby all Licensed Houses after a few years are to be done away with as far as pauper lunatics are

concerned, to the great loss of proprietors....”⁷¹⁰ Since Hanwell had been open for thirteen years with little permanent effect on trade, this may have been just this year’s excuse to hike up the price. The opening of Colney Hatch in 1851 however did have a seriously adverse effect on the metropolitan licensed houses which were dependent on the pauper trade. These houses also took paupers from the Home Counties and even further afield, from counties which would soon be obliged to build their own public asylums, so perhaps Warburton’s fears were justified. Aubyn’s in Camberwell was quick to seize the marketing advantage by offering to undercut Bethnal Green Asylum’s new rates by 1s, that is a charge of 10s per week.⁷¹¹

The Guardians were reluctant to change their habits; they’d been doing business with their local asylum for so long and Phillips was well known to them. They sent Robert Brutton the Clerk down to the Asylum to see if Phillips could be persuaded to waive the new rate.⁷¹² He did. The 10s rate was still four times as expensive as the workhouse and even Hanwell was pricey at 8s 9d compared with retaining lunatics in the House. One of the Guardians Charles Jennery moved that a portion of the House should be refurbished for lunatics. He estimated that the capital outlay would be about £1000, the annual revenue savings about £4-500. The Board decided to write to the Poor Law Commission and the Lunacy Commission for their views.⁷¹³ Chairman William Howard dampened Jennery’s enthusiasm by pointing out that both Commissions were bound to want a well fitted up new, separate building at a cost of at least £2000. The new regulations would require the lunatic wards to have a resident medical officer and special attendants; savings would be small. The Guardians reluctantly abandoned the idea. Not long after Phillips wrote with the news the price was going up again.⁷¹⁴

While the numbers of insane paupers sent to private licensed houses and asylums dropped markedly after the opening of Colney Hatch, the numbers of insane retained in workhouses continued to rise over the next decade. The Lunacy Commissioners observed that an increasing number of unions seemed to be opening specialist insane wards. This puzzling phenomenon warranted enumeration, so in 1862 they issued a Special Return requesting the number of such wards in each workhouse and the

numbers of insane paupers admitted to the workhouse in the year 1861. (See Table 7.1 p224 below).⁷¹⁵ Some unions interpreted the request to mean numbers of insane admitted and staying in the workhouse, others included all those who passed through the workhouse during the course of an admission for insanity, including those who were rapidly passed on to an asylum. This was the first year the Commission collected information directly from parish "House medical officers", having found that by-passing the union clerks improved the quality and the percentage of expected returns received. The Returns were subject still of course to the vagaries of doctors' interpretation of 'insanity'.

Table 7.1 Return of Unions in which the Sane are not intermixed with the Insane and where lunatic wards have been established, number of lunatics in each separate ward together with the Number of Lunatics Received into Union workhouses from January 1861 to January 1862

Union	Insane wards	Numbers of insane received in year	Numbers in insane wards
Bethnal Green	No	14	-
Clerkenwell	Yes	26	11,21
St George in the East	Yes	20	12,20
Hackney	No	10	-
City of London	Yes	35	14,21,58,9,20
East London	Yes	20	11,13
West London	Yes	56	20,35,2
Mile End Old Town	Yes	39	4 wards, total 40
Poplar	Yes	39	-
Shoreditch	Yes	40	17,19
Stepney	No	1	12,24
Whitechapel	Yes	51	-

Stepney, the first East End union to establish lunatic wards, was also the first to abandon them. By 1849 they had no special ward and thought it best to use asylums. They were still using the workhouses to receive emergency cases while admission to an asylum was being arranged, although this is not obvious from the table and there were still older female lunatics at Wapping. The day-to-day admission of the despairing and transiently distressed was what workhouses were there for. There was a dangerously narrow swing bridge over a filthy lock in the docks in Wapping called "Mr Baker's Trap" by locals after the Coroner had drawn attention to it as a common place for suicides. A dirty puffy sallow young man told Dickens that young women took a "header in....", got fished out by the police or anyone who would do it. Are they restored, Dickens asked? "They're carried into the werkiss and put in a 'ot bath and brought round. But I dunno about restored".⁷¹⁶

Bethnal Green, after rejecting the idea of separate provision for lunatics in 1846, mixed their insane with other inmates. Hackney also officially had no insane ward. All other East London unions had identified special wards. Excluding the three City of London unions, which had no right to use the Middlesex Asylums and had not yet built their own, there were approximately 200 official 'insane beds' in East London workhouses.

Mentally incapacitated but not quite 'mad' inmates in the union houses were a management strain on the Masters but not of very great interest to the Lunacy Commission. By the late 1850's Commissioners had more than enough to do overseeing the mushrooming asylums. The number of sites and the number of detained patients to be visited were multiplying. The asylum spores that they had done so much to nurture were turning into monstrous puffballs of incarceration. Some years the Commissioners did not visit workhouses at all, or if they did, they did not feel it was worth commenting in their annual reports. They were more concerned in 1860 with 6000 single pauper patients boarded out in private homes, all of whom the Commission thought would be better off in an asylum, since "there is infinitely less observation than patients detained in workhouses".⁷¹⁷ The legal provisions were meant to transfer the insane pauper "from parochial to magisterial authority", whereas boarded out patients were under "no

supervision by anyone, not by Relieving Officers or Guardians, nor the Poor Law Inspectors". The Commission noted that the number of boarded out patients was inversely correlated with public asylum accommodation. Norwich had 90 boarded out and no asylum. Wales had several hundred and no asylum. In London however there were no more than a handful of single patients declared, none officially in many East London unions.

"The great bulk of persons [in workhouses] are feeble or defective....being in most cases of a congenital or organic and therefore of a permanent nature.....not likely to benefit from treatment".⁷¹⁸ Instead of an asylum, the Commissioners prescribed work, which they felt would raise the self-esteem and improve the mental condition of these unfortunates. The main benefit an asylum could offer, these first Commissioners felt in the optimistic days of the late 40s and 50s, was treatment and if a patient was beyond treatment the only point in transferring them to an asylum was to control violent and difficult behaviour.

The Commissioners carried out 268 visits to Workhouses during 1849-50 but the nearest they came to the East End was to the Houses at Clerkenwell, which housed 36 lunatics and Holborn, which had 18. Neither warranted special mention in their annual report. They kept up their visits to workhouses and asylums at a punishing pace from 1845-55. These annual visits were taken more seriously by the Guardians as the Commissioners became more adept at recruiting the support of their colleagues on the Poor Law Board to press a particular case or desirable change. In the early years, the Commissioners had made a note in the Workhouse visitors' book and assumed that their comments would be brought to the attention of the Board. In efficient Stepney they were. In St George in the East and Bethnal Green, it seems they were not. The Masters did not always notify their Guardians of the visitors' remarks, or if they did, not in such a way that demanded any action. Later the Commissioners adopted the practice of sending a written report directly to the Poor Law Board as well as leaving a note in the Visitors' book. The central Board then took up specific points directly with the Guardians.

The Lunacy Commissioners returned to Bethnal Green, visited Hackney Workhouse and both Whitechapel houses, in Charles Street and in Mile End Road in the year ending June 1851. Nationwide, “the numbers of insane poor detained in workhouses is diminishing in a very marked degree”.⁷¹⁹ There were 30 insane paupers in the Mile End House when the unnamed Lunacy Commissioners visited in February 1851.

Joseph Nash is Medical Officer and visits several times daily. Mr Nicholas Murrell is Master. There are separate wards for lunatics, the bedding and clothing is sufficient but not very clean or orderly. The female lunatic ward is still as reported in the last visit of the Commissioners—very dark and cheerless and the airing court extremely confined. One small room serves as a day room and dormitory for nearly 20 patients. There are few seats, no easy chairs and by no means sufficient table accommodation.

The patients are tranquil and said not to require mechanical restraint. Those patients that are mixed with the other inmates are better accommodated. John Marr is under a certificate and will be removed as soon as a vacancy can be found in an asylum. The patients are not allowed a superior diet unless they are on the sick list.⁷²⁰

This report was included with the Assistant Commissioner Hall’s report of his visit to the disorderly receiving ward that same month of May when he had found mothers and infants sharing an insufficient number of beds and that all too common economy measure, two men in each male bed. The Whitechapel Guardians were concerned enough about this letter to send the Visiting Committee to have a look. They recommended “ventilating glass in the hall windows, the lunatic wards to be limewhited and if practicable a new window to be put in to the wall”. A long list of furniture was needed for wards 18,20,25,24 and 49. (This gives some idea of the vast size of the Mile End workhouse, each ward having 20 or so inmates) Finally, they suggested “that Nathan Levy, Lunatic be immediately removed to an asylum at any cost, he disturbing the whole house night and day”.⁷²¹

Why had the Visiting Committee not made these recommendations before since they were obliged to visit the houses regularly? The Lunacy Commission’s report had sat unnoticed in the Visitors’ Book for three months before the Poor Law Board had sent their reminder. Were the Whitechapel Guardians complacent, slackly attentive to detail, concentrating their visits elsewhere? This incident illustrates the value of a visiting inspectorate in raising standards if the inspected body was willing to comply with

recommendations. The Guardians decided to act immediately—they ordered new furniture, set alterations in train, made enquiries about where to send Nathan Levy (his real name was Levi Nathan Eisendrath). He and another disturbed man, Luke Cone, who figured regularly in the Guardians' minutes because he had relatives that they never quite gave up hope of extracting cash from, were sent to Kent County Lunatic Asylum at the expense, they hoped, of the Common Poor Fund.^{722 a}

Kent Asylum was willing to accept paupers from other counties to fill their beds. Middlesex had always adhered to the rule that Hanwell was for Middlesex paupers only, except for those without a settlement who were paid for by the Common Fund. In any case, after the first year they never had the space or the need to do so. In the run-up to the opening of Colney Hatch in August 1851 there was not a single vacancy in any licensed house in East London. Hanwell was full, so was Bethnal Green, keeping its numbers down and its reputation up, so were Hoxton House, Armstrong's at Peckham and Aubyn's^b at Camberwell. Aubyn's had mopped up the excess for the past couple of years. By the end of 1850, Stepney was spending £730 per quarter on lunatics and idiot placements in addition to maintaining the wards at Wapping and Mile End.^c The quarterly accounts record costs as follows:

Hanwell	£215. 16s 0d
Warburton's	£71. 10s 0d
Bryan's	£28. 12s 0d
Aubin's	£227. 4s 8d
Byas'	£159. 6s 11d
Kent County Asylum	£28. 16s 4d

Mrs Megson had been working as the 'master' of Wapping for eleven years; her health was poor, she needed a break. The Chairman, Spencer Charrington^d and the Board

^a The Guardians were to be disappointed. The Middlesex Justices' settlement investigators adjudicated Luke Cone to Whitechapel some months later.

^b variously spelt Aubins/ Aubyn's

^c Mile End was part in Stepney, part in Whitechapel. There were Mile End Workhouses in both unions.

^d Spencer Charrington was from one of several East London brewing dynasties whose members served as Guardians. A relative, John Charrington, a coal merchant, served around the same time as Spencer and followed him as Chairman of the Board. Both Charrington business empires survived into the second half of the 20th century. The original Stepney brewery site is now for sale. Charrington's Brewery has been swallowed up by one of the huge multi-national brewing corporations. Charrington's Fuels still deliver

decided she should have 3 months leave to recuperate in the country and gave her £10 gratuity to cover her expenses. This seems to have worked; three months later she was back as vocal in her demands as ever, in time to participate in the plans for transferring the pauper lunatics from the Stepney workhouses to the new 'eastern asylum' at Colney Hatch.⁷²³

Sorely pressed for accommodation for lunatics, East London unions were tempted to avail themselves of the offer which arrived in early 1851 from their former Assistant Commissioner Mr Mott to take their insane paupers into his own asylum, Haydock Lodge in Lancashire.⁷²⁴ Having calculated the expense of such distant placements however, "neither the distance nor price appeared to enlist the Guardians' feelings and they declined the proposal". They hung on using *ad hoc* placements at Kent County Asylum until Colney Hatch opened.

Complaints investigations

The Lunacy Commission was empowered to investigate complaints relating to the care and treatment of detained patients and paupers. Before 1845 the Poor Law Commission investigated complaints concerning insane paupers. From 1845 complaints were sometimes passed on to the Lunacy Commissioners but often not. It is not clear why this was. The case of Samuel Lewis in Whitechapel, for example, was never drawn to the Commissioners' attention yet would seem very relevant to their remit and would have provided fine political capital for Shaftesbury if he had been aware of it.

Lewis, "a dangerous lunatic" was admitted to Whitechapel workhouse on 27 March 1851 and died at home on 11 June. His relatives made a formal complaint to the Poor Law Board that he had been neglected in the workhouse and died as a direct consequence. In May the family, with the help of an independent surgeon Mr Constatt as their advisor, made a complaint to the Union about Lewis's treatment in the workhouse. The workhouse doctor, Mr Nash investigated and made a report to the Board but no resolutions were passed at the Board in consequence. This first complaint

coal, solid fuel and oil from their depot in Manor Park E7 (Fraser-Stephen, E 1952 *Two Centuries in the London Coal Trade: the Story of Charringtons*. London, published privately).

seems to have been dismissed as unfounded.⁷²⁵ The family took it up with the Poor Law Board. Assistant Commissioner Richard Hall made enquiries. On arrival at the workhouse receiving ward, Lewis had been uncontrollably violent. The staff had no idea how to handle him. "He was restrained for 8 days strapped down in bed with manacles on his legs and arms and a belt across his waist". After 8 days he was a little less disturbed so "he was confined less but by April 12th the Medical Officer (Mr Nash) reported him dangerously ill. Sloughs had formed on his back and limbs. There were none when he was admitted....He was removed by friends on 6 May, died on the 11 June". Attempts had been made to find a place in a lunatic asylum but no vacancy could be found anywhere in London. Lewis had been kept in the receiving ward from his admission to the day his relatives insisted on removing him.

The Poor Law Board's verdict was that Lewis died of "serious neglect, that the conduct of the nurse was reprehensible; the Master was also to blame". The Guardians were reminded of the requirement to remove a dangerous lunatic within 14 days; "the Officer allowing it [i.e., the lunatic's retention in the House] is guilty of a misdemeanour under Section 45" of the Amendment Act. Whitechapel Guardians responded to this severe censure hardly at all. Since there were no asylum beds available anywhere in London the recommendations were not calculated to gain their support. The Guardians resolved to send a copy of the report to the Master, the Medical Officer and Mrs Scott the nurse and that was the end of the episode and the complaint.⁷²⁶ The report arrived in June; Colney Hatch was due to open in July; all their lunatic placement problems would be over. The Lunacy Commission was not involved in any way. Could it be that the Poor Law Board preferred wherever possible not to share such disasters with their Lunacy Commission colleagues? Such incidents reflected badly on their own inspectorate's ability to maintain standards.

Hackney Union saw no threat in the Commissioners. They decided to set some problems before them, to see if they could get helpful advice. Richard Sowersby was a quiet imbecile patient at Sir Jonathan Miles'^e; the Guardians wanted advice on whether they

^e Hoxton House was still called Miles' in the 1850's even though 25 years had elapsed since Miles ceased to be proprietor.

could safely return him to the workhouse. Was he or was he not dangerous within the meaning of the Act?⁷²⁷ They wrote to the Commission in July 1850 and got an acknowledgement three weeks later. They sent a reminder in August, got a reply in September promising to visit soon and then finally another in a non-directive style from Lutwidge, the Commission Secretary. "In his present state he might be managed in the workhouse...on the whole the Commissioners felt it was better to leave him where he was ...he spoke very favourably of the treatment he was receiving".

This did not help the Guardians; they were looking for support to remove him to save money and they were left with the responsibility for making the decision. The consultation exercise had taken three months. The Lunacy Commissioners were going to be no more helpful than the team at Somerset House. The Guardians embarked on a tour of the lunatic establishments to identify "harmless idiotcy cases" who "ought to be brought back to the Union".⁷²⁸ A fortnight later Hackney Board decided to discharge back to the House from Armstrong's Ann Finch, Benjamin Clark and Thomas Exley and to bring 6 others from Miles, Warburton's and Aubins in front of the Board to be examined in front of them by the House surgeon, Hovell. Hovell objected to the six staying in the House but his advice was overridden. Within a week he brought four back before the Guardians to remonstrate with them about the difficulties and the risk he believed they posed. The Board again ignored his advice. The Hackney Guardians were determined to save money, whatever the doctor and the Lunacy Commissioners wanted.⁷²⁹

The effectiveness of the Lunacy Commission

In 1867, as part of their campaign to promote the Metropolitan Asylums Bill, the Poor Law Board published an entire decade of reports by the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Poor Law Board from 1856 to 1866 and the correspondence between them on the subject of the Metropolitan Workhouses.⁷³⁰ The overall impression is of gravely inadequate care in defective institutions, although none of the individual reports is especially shocking and or noteworthy. Care in workhouses was not uniformly bad. Frances Power Cobbe, in her critique of the New Poor Law commented:

Workhouses are lunatic asylums for all except violent cases. Many of them contain scores of insane patients. Here a total different order of things comes in view. The Commissioners mercifully intervene in favour of these poor souls, and compel the Guardians to treat them in a manner superior to other inmates in many respects. The appearance of their wards, decently furnished and often adorned with prints and supplied with objects for their amusement, is at first a surprise to the workhouse visitor.

Cobbe objected to the lack of specific medical treatment for mental disease in workhouses and wanted more insane moved to asylums for that reason alone, not because the general care was poor.⁷³¹ The City of London Guardians argued that their policy of placing patients according to individual needs was better able to respond to variations between patients than to build a remote asylum that would offer only one solution.⁷³² The City Aldermen were willing to spend what was necessary to secure their own sense of magnanimity. They remained unconvinced of the Lunacy Commission's arguments in favour of public over private asylums and could see no sense in building an institution of their own when there were ample rather good places locally. They had a point. Bethnal Green Asylum was getting better annual reports from the Commissioners in the 1840's and early 50's than many public asylums.

Lunacy Commissioners' reports tended to be similar to the one before in content, differing only in style between visiting Commissioners. Sam Gaskell, WG Campbell and Nairne were careful but genially encouraging and understanding. Forster^f and Procter were less sympathetic; their detailed accounts left no stone unturned. Officious Lutwidge was downright bad tempered. These reports chronicle the swings in efficiency of union administration, Guardians' responsiveness to criticism and their changing attitudes to caring for idiots and long term mentally dependent patients. Over a five-year period an effective administration could sink into deplorably poor habits; a good workhouse might become filthy and dilapidated within a few months of losing a competent Master. Conversely a determined Board could transform the accommodation, care and therefore the lives of the lunatic inmates.

^f John Forster, historian, friend and biographer of Dickens

^g RWS Lutwidge became a full Commissioner after retiring as first Secretary of the Commission. He was attacked by a patient on a visit to Fisherton House Wiltshire in 1873 and died as a result. (Hunter and Macalpine 1974 op cit 107).

All East London parishes and unions were chronically short of funds, most of their workhouses were poorly constructed and unsuitable for the old and sick people who then made up the majority of the inmates. Few Boards employed paid nurses or trained attendants to care for the lunatics and imbeciles. In spite of their manifest inadequacies in managing seriously dependent people, Guardians and officials were reluctant to acknowledge defects in the accommodation or regime or keen to remove difficult patients to expensive asylums. An editorial in the *Lancet* complained in 1869 that Guardians and workhouse staff could not judge the difference between a disorderly able person and one whose difficult or disorderly behaviour was caused through insanity. The consequence was that harsh rules and punishments were extended to those who were “in Bastilles for life”.⁷³³

The one union that received enthusiastic praise for its splendid workhouse was the City of London Union’s ‘Grand Hotel’, the Bow Institution,^g “a house of architectural pretensions”.^{734 735} The Lunacy Commission suggested other unions visit to see how their lunatic and imbecile wards were managed. St Leonard’s Shoreditch modelled their new wards on the Bow example in 1863.⁷³⁶

The rented workhouse of the St Luke’s Old Street Union in the City Road was typical of many Gaskell, Wilkes, Procter and Forster criticised between 1857 and 61.⁷³⁷ There were so many mentally disordered people in the huge institution that “the workhouse is substantially a lunatic asylum and ought to have the ordinary comforts and conveniences of one” remarked Forster in ‘58. The wards were crowded, the yards too small, there were insufficient staff, the diet was inferior, 72 patients were in crowded lunatic wards who “want of such treatment as only an asylum can afford”. The Guardians were unresponsive. The medical officer Harris denied there were any lunatics in the workhouse requiring an asylum, they were all tranquil and manageable. The Guardians

^g City of London Corporation Workhouse is now St Clement’s Hospital, Bow, a sadly neglected psychiatric hospital due to close. The painted and tiled Victorian gothic Giotto-esque entrance hall was still preserved in 1979. Almost all the original features have been thoughtlessly ripped out by NHS managers over the past twenty years. Only the striking Italianate exterior, the City Corporation coats of arms on the gate and some dilapidated wards are preserved from the old Institution. The separate grand Guardians’ Boardroom on the same site, with fine marble fireplaces, plaster ceiling and ornamental columns is still in use by the Health Authority.

disagreed that the wards were overcrowded, the yards they declared adequate, the dietary information the Commissioners had been given was wrong. As to the suggestion that there should be more attendants, the Chairman George Whittle wrote that "The present attendants ...suffer from want of scope for energetic exertion", there was insufficient work for them to do; it would be pointless appointing more.

The Commissioners complained repeatedly to the Poor Law Board about the lack of action in "this discreditable workhouse". Eventually in July '61 the Poor Law Board threatened an official inquiry into St Luke's accommodation for lunatics and idiots if they continued "to decline to act". The Guardians stood their ground; they seemed to have judged that the Lunacy Commissioners' recommendations would not be supported by the Poor Law Authority. Farnall, the local Poor Law Inspector carried out a detailed inquiry in October '61. Mary Ann Bishop, the superintendent on the female lunatic side, contradicted all the evidence of Harris and the Guardians and backed the Commissioners. Farnall ordered Harris to send lunatic patients to an asylum. By April 62, Harris had agreed to send one, Mary Traes, to Colney Hatch. Conditions remained essentially unchanged until 1867. Conditions at St Luke's represented a conspicuous failure for both central inspectorates.

The legal context in which the Lunacy Commission operated shifted marginally to their advantage as a result of Shaftesbury's continuing pressure on his parliamentary friends. The Amendment Act of 1862 gave the Lunacy Commission power to order the compulsory transfer of lunatics from workhouses to an asylum and conversely to grant permission for chronic untreatable cases to be returned from the asylum to the workhouse. The object was to speed up the flow of patients between different parts of the system. They exercised the power of direction sparingly and do not seem to have pushed St Luke's Guardians as hard as they might to transfer patients to Colney Hatch.

The Hamlet of Mile End Old Town separated from Stepney Union in 1857 to form its own Board of Guardians, much against the wishes of Stepney Guardians who protested at the carving up of their area and the consequent loss of rate revenue. Stepney's rapidly

growing pauperised population was thought too difficult for one union to manage. The new Mile End Board built a new workhouse in the Bancroft Road^h and fitted up lunatic wards on the ground floor of the infirmary block. There were no paid attendants for these wards and only one nurse employed for the whole infirmary although she had been recruited from Colney Hatch so as to provide some expertise in the lunatic wards. The accommodation was clean and pleasant enough and the visiting Commissioners^{where} broadly satisfied with the care.⁷³⁸ Campbell identified three dangerously insane or difficult patients who he felt should be moved, and once the Clerk had got off his chest that Campbell's written report was far more critical than he had indicated it would be on his visit, complied as best he could with the Commissioner's recommendations.

The Lunacy Acts Amendment Act of 1862 provided statutory permission for workhouses to admit chronically insane and imbecile patients from Lunatic Asylums subject to approval by the Secretary of State.⁷³⁹ In practice the Lunacy Commissioners made the recommendation for the licence to be granted. Lutwidge quibbled about some minor details but Mile End received statutory approval for its special lunatic wards in 1863 and took 20 patients back from Colney Hatch. By 1864 they had 75 lunatics and imbeciles in special wards and the regime was considered good. There were outings organised to Victoria Park and Epping Forest, various amusements and a good diet.

Chronic patients inevitably accumulated; Mile End Guardians wanted to add a third storey to the lunatic wards in 1863. Lutwidge had ruffled the union clerk, Southwell on one of his previous visits by failing to announce his arrival or inviting him to meet him; he upset him still further by his swift response to the expansion plan: "the proposal... should be at once negatived". That is typical of Lutwidge's irascible bossiness. So what should the Guardians do about the overcrowding, they asked? Buy more land was the inevitable answer.

The majority of East London unions used their workhouses as the first point of admission for acute cases of insanity. The relieving officer would bring in the patient,

^h Mile End Workhouse survives as Mile End Hospital. It has been upgraded numerous times but a few of the old blocks survive.

the workhouse medical officer would decide if he needed removing to an asylum, then the committal would be completed by the agreement of a local clergyman. (A clergyman could substitute for a magistrate in committal proceedings until 1889). Patients would remain in the workhouse for several weeks while a decision was made about their future unless their behaviour was so unmanageable that an early transfer to an asylum was arranged. It was not difficult to get the patient in to Colney Hatch if there was a bed; Colney Hatch had an admissions office in Islington where relieving officers could take suitable candidates to be examined by a magistrate. Many unions preferred to delay admission to see if the patient would settle because they often improved sufficiently to go home within a few days.

Poplar Union differed from most of their neighbours in retaining very few insane in the workhouse. The Union maintained their policy of using outdoor relief whenever possible and kept people out of the House if they could. Lunatics and imbeciles who needed care would go straight to an asylum. When Campbell visited in June 1856 there were only 5 imbeciles in the House, all well cared for.⁷⁴⁰ There was only one disagreement recorded between the Commission and Poplar Union. In 1863 Campbell wrote "George Gould an epileptic is in a restless and morose state and is stated to be very troublesome and annoying to other inmates. He is also a danger to himself and a short time ago attempted to throw himself over the banisters of the upper landing". Campbell had heard that Gould had been taken by the medical officer before the magistrate Mr Green, who had refused to give an order for an asylum. The Clerk retorted that the Union did not want to move Gould; he was better now and the story was in any case wrong. He "did not attempt to throw himself over..merely made a threat to his mother, 'If you do not take me home I shall jump over the stairs'." ⁷⁴¹ Gould stayed in the workhouse.

Poplar considered building a new workhouse in 1860 but decided to join Stepney Union in building a new workhouse in Bromley-by-Bow.⁷⁴² This vast grim utilitarian institution opened in April 1863 and took over the inmates of all the old Poplar infirmary wards and the chronic lunatics and imbeciles from the Stepney Houses at Wapping and Ratcliff. The quality of accommodation was reasonably good but the quantity quickly became

insufficient. There were no paid attendants for the 46 imbeciles in July 1863 when W G Campbell visited for the Commission.

By 1856 Stepney had made very little progress with improvements to its capital estate. The Union seems to have lost its front rank position after Baker retired. Mrs Megson continued in her old job as Master of Wapping and impressed Sam Gaskell on his visit there in May 1862.⁷⁴³ “Found the insane inmates tranquil and orderly. They are actively supervised by Mrs Megson who appears to be very attentive to her duties.”

Mrs Megson had charge of nearly 400 inmates. While she was exceptional in many ways, she worked in an appallingly dismal and dilapidated environment and had almost no staff other than old women paupers selected from the inmates. Older women who had been admitted to the workhouse as young destitute mothers were by now some of the fittest inmates. Twenty years earlier Mrs Megson and the medical officer Daniel Ross had reduced the use of restraints to a minimum but she still kept a strait waistcoat under a bed just in case it was needed. There are two mentions of it being used in the 1850s. Lunacy Commissioner Forster had complained in 1860 that its use was authorised by an unpaid pauper nurse who could not remember the patients names, could not read or write.⁷⁴⁴ “Mrs Megson stated that this nurse was kind to the patients which however her manner towards them did not indicate”.

By 1860 Wapping workhouse was used for emergency admissions of mentally ill women in Stepney. Lunacy Commissioner Wilkes drew attention to the difficulties this posed for untrained workhouse staff. Caroline Robinson for example was

sent to the workhouse in an insane state having attempted to cut her own throat and threatened her husband's life. After being in the House a fortnight she seized a table knife for the purpose of again cutting her throat (which she did to a slight extent) but in getting the knife from her she received a very severe wound on the hand. I strongly recommend that whenever practicable the relieving officers should be instructed to send insane persons direct to the asylum without passing through the workhouse.⁷⁴⁵

Few unions took notice of the Commissioners' exhortations not to use the workhouse as an assessment/receiving place for the insane. It was geographically convenient for

parish officers, required no formal certification procedure and many patients recovered and went home very quickly. With luck the expense of an asylum stay could be avoided. The admission procedure established in the mid-nineteenth century, to a local institution followed by discharge home or placement in an asylum, established a pattern of clinical assessment that remained broadly the same in London until the closure of the large asylums in the late-20th century.

Whitechapel Union had two large workhouses, in Charles Street and Whitechapel Road.ⁱ A responsible and responsive Union by the late 1850s, Whitechapel retained only 22 chronic insane patients in the House in 1857. Nairne, Campbell and Lutwidge gave good reports overall of the standards of care in 1857, 60 and '63.⁷⁴⁶ Lutwidge made several suggestions for improving the regime which G Adams Farr, the Union Clerk, conscientiously responded to in detail, the Board having broadly agreed with Lutwidge's proposals. A new workhouse and infirmary was built in 1860-61 but it quickly proved too small and unsuitable for the growing number of imbeciles. In 1865 Farnall the Poor Law Inspector suggested that they could construct a new building for imbeciles on land the Union owned at Forest Gate next to the Union schools but the Union were not receptive to that idea. It is not clear whether their reluctance was because of the cost or for organisational reasons. In the event alterations and extensions to the new workhouse provided new imbecile wards in 1866.⁷⁴⁷

The parish of St Leonard's Shoreditch struggled to provide a decent environment in an ancient workhouse built in 1777. The building was huge, overflowing with unclassified patients. One medical officer "devotes much attention to the patients" Gaskell thought and the Board was ever willing to accept suggestions for improving the wards but somehow never got round to doing anything about it during the late 1850s. Instead they began planning an ambitious new workhouse and infirmary which would be the envy of other unions. It was a long time coming; it took until 1865 to finish the new building and in the years between 1859 and 1865 conditions at St Leonards deteriorated to the point of being scandalous.

The hard winter of 1860-61 left a legacy of an increase in the permanent population in the East London workhouses. The Thames and the docks froze over. "Nearly the whole of the Labourers in and about the London docks and along the banks of the river were thrown out of work by the severe frost which set in on the 17th December and with two slight intermissions lasted until 19th January."⁷⁴⁸

The localities with the greatest distress were the City of London, Bethnal Green, Lambeth, Greenwich and Poplar. By the fifth week of the freeze, there were nearly 30,000 additional paupers seeking refuge and relief in addition to the normal 97,000 paupers. Thousands of people were kept going through a voluntary fund donated by the general public in response to the publicity in the newspapers, administered through the Police Magistrates' offices. Mr Southgate, Chairman of the Board of Guardians of Shoreditch spoke to the Committee of the "extra-ordinary pressure" on the parish but felt that the Board could have managed without the voluntary funds if they had been obliged to. Mr Howard from Bethnal Green disagreed. There would have been "fearful loss of life from starvation" without the charitable funds, he thought.⁷⁴⁹

Shoreditch officials coped by becoming immune to the plight of their paupers and the dire conditions in their workhouse. The wards became infested with bed bugs, the sanitary facilities gravely inadequate, there were no WC's with trap pans, only open earth closets and smelly old latrines. "The Insane Wards are of a prison-like character", "the yards are surrounded by high walls and comfortless airing courts" which several attempts at planting had done little to soften.⁷⁵⁰ Gaskell, who visited in '62 and '63 also took Shoreditch to task for taking lunatic William Varney twice before police magistrates for misdemeanors which landed him for short spells in prison, once for striking an old man and once for refusing to work. The Clerk insisted he was sane when he committed the offences but Gaskell clearly did not believe it.⁷⁵¹

By 1863 there were over 100 imbeciles and chronic lunatics in the workhouse. It would be impossible to rebuild while the inmates were inside so the Trustees borrowed, at a cost of £1000 per annum, the dilapidated, recently vacated Wapping workhouse from

ⁱ These two Whitechapel workhouses have been demolished



Shoreditch Workhouse Infirmary 1865 (photo 1998)

Fig 7.1: photograph E Murphy 1998

Stepney Union and sent the insane there under the care of Mrs Hickman, where they remained until 1866. (They had first planned to rent a decommissioned prison in Whitecross Street in the parish of St Lukes, next door to a huge 'houseless' refuge but this plan fell through). The Lunacy Commissioners were impressed with the dedication of the Medical Officer James Clark and the workhouse master Mr Painter to the welfare of the imbeciles and lunatics but they seemed powerless to effect real change during the chaos of the rebuilding programme.

The Lancet Commission

The Lunacy Commissioners were good at spotting problems on their intermittent visits to workhouses but not sufficiently influential or powerful to insist on major changes. They could not make the Guardians spend money and they could not insist on staffing levels being increased. They worked on the 'drip, drip' principle of continually criticising the same things, hoping to wear down the Guardians into accepting their suggestions but the Guardians were masters of procrastination and not very susceptible to exhortation. If they felt inclined to accept the suggestions and criticisms, things got done; if not, nothing changed.

The Commission never understood how to influence public opinion through the trade and general press. Their bland reports did not shock sufficiently to disturb the Guardians' habitual institutional inertia. In contrast the *Lancet* published a series of dramatic reports through 1865 and 66 by three doctors, Carr, Anstie and Hart who visited workhouse infirmaries on the Journal's behalf to report on conditions. Grandly called the Lancet Sanitary Commission for Investigating the State of the Infirmaries in Workhouses, every fortnight for a year one or more of the metropolitan workhouses was described in minute horrifying detail.⁷⁵² It was marvellous sensationalist reporting.

The *Lancet* Report on St Leonard's, Shoreditch was typical.⁷⁵³ Three-quarters of the 700 inmates were permanent residents, 130 imbecile or lunatic. The Workhouse "combines the principal merits and defects of the system". The history of its management was "paved with good intentions" and there was "much goodwill and openness. The Master [Mr Painter] is an able, business-like and judicious official. The Medical Officer [James Clark] is a man of considerable vigour, long experience and kindly nature" but:

If we have to show that the infirmary is a terrible failure and the whole state of things in it disgraceful to the parish and to the country, we must ask that a great allowance be made for the superhuman difficulties of the task which would be involved in a fitting administration by this one gentleman of the duties which are properly incidental to the management of so large a hospital as this.

They commented on the extreme cheerlessness and the desolation of the imbeciles

moping about in herds without any occupation whatever...congregated in a miserable day-room where they sit and stare at each other or the bare walls....treated as we would kennel dogs in decent kennels. We denounce the cruelty of keeping these imbeciles in a cheerless town workhouse.

There was just one medical officer for the 700 and one paid nurse. The male pauper nurses "struck us as a peculiarly rough, ignorant and uncouth set". There were no night nurses. The imbeciles were better off than the sick whose sores and sloughs were covered in rags for want of bandages, the wards "frequently filthy with crusted blood and discharges". A man with gangrene lay unattended on a hard straw mattress, medicines were dished out in a haphazard fashion from huge pots with little regard to prescription. The *Lancet's* visitors pondered how good men with fine aspirations could ignore the frightful conditions. They concluded that the Guardians, the Medical Officer and the Master were "deadened by long routine".

This dynamite prose was immediately picked up by *The Morning Advertiser* and *The Times*.⁷⁵⁴ The Shoreditch Guardians were forced to respond publicly and made much of the progress of the new building, defending the care of imbeciles who they said were "often taken out in vans into the Forest" for their amusement.⁷⁵⁵ They could point to the elegant brand new Offices of the Poor as evidence of their commitment.^j They defended themselves as well as they could but this stinging very public humiliation did the Shoreditch Guardians a power of good. They made major investments; smartened up their public image too and commissioned a suitably impressive facade and fashionable mansard 'French chateau' style roof for their new workhouse infirmary building (see illustrations ^{Figs 7.1 & 7.2} ~~opposite~~). The *Lancet* had achieved with one article what the Lunacy Commissioners had failed to in a decade of reports.



Fig 7.2: Offices for the Relief of the Poor, St Leonard Shoreditch 1863, photograph E Murphy 1998

The three *Lancet* doctors were unmerciful about Bethnal Green's relatively new workhouse constructed in 1840^k. The prison-like three-storey building was so overcrowded it was necessary to crawl "crab-like" between the beds in the 27 sick wards painted in stark, chilling white. Imbeciles were mixed in to unclassified wards unless so uncontrollable they were sent to the Asylum. "The male insane ward is a disgrace to the institution". Small, dark, ill-ventilated and with no outlook because the windows were 6 feet off the floor, the rooms were "utterly unfit for the purpose".⁷⁵⁶

The *Lancet* men concluded: "the conditions of imbeciles in London workhouses is a deeply painful subject". They singled out the "oasis" at St Marylebone, with a garden, bird-cages, rabbit hutches and pictures but that was exceptional. Few of these institutions could be modified into proper hospitals they thought, although with sufficient investment, the Houses of Hackney, Stepney, City of London, Mile End Old Town and Bethnal Green had promise but proper nurses would be needed and more medical staff.⁷⁵⁷ ^l The *Lancet* had no faith in the ability of the London Guardians or workhouse staff to run hospitals, regarding them as responsible for the "monstrous deficiencies".⁷⁵⁸

The Guardians were demonised by both the Lunacy Commissioners and the self-appointed *Lancet* Commissioners, perhaps unfairly given the cash constraints of the rating system and their impoverished populations. In their 1867 Report the Commissioners deplored the "disposition to withdraw them [lunatics] from the protection of the lunacy laws and place them under the irresponsible care of the Guardians", language that fifteen years earlier would have been unthinkable. The unions were working with a per-capita budget less than a half that available to the Magistrates

^j The splendid 1863 Guardians' Offices of the Poor on Hoxton Street have recently been restored and are now the headquarters of a Housing Association, see Illustration.

^k There is still a hospital on this site but a new workhouse was constructed on Cambridge Heath Road later in the nineteenth century, which became Bethnal Green Hospital. That building was demolished to make way for social housing and facilities for elderly people with mental disorders in about 1990.

^l Every one of these workhouses did eventually turn into a hospital; all except Bethnal Green are still in use.

and modest compared to the budget creamed off later from the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund by the Metropolitan Asylums Board.

There was no drive to remove the chronic harmless cases to asylums. No one really wanted to take responsibility for imbeciles and the chronically insane. The report of the first meeting of the newly named Medico-Psychological Association (the old Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane) in 1865 makes it very clear that insane persons came in desirable and undesirable forms.

The question of the condition of the insane in workhouses is one to which we have recently called earnest attention. Whether a few old and imbecile patients may not properly be left in the workhouse is not a matter of very great moment but what is entirely unjustifiable to keep in the workhouse for one hour longer than is absolutely necessary in acute cases of insanity, anyone who knows what are the requirements of treatment in such cases and what workhouses at present are, must feel strongly.⁷⁵⁹

Treatability was what turned on the doctors. The acutely mad were welcome in the asylum; idiots and old dements languishing in disgraceful workhouses were not their concern.

The Lunacy Commissioners advocated separate asylums under the control of the magistrates but had few allies. The Boards of Guardians were broadly sympathetic to the notion of providing special facilities as long as this imposed no extra cost on their ratepayers but they were opposed to the magistrates having control. The effectiveness of the Commission was significantly undermined by the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 which created separate institutions for imbeciles under the control of a central government dominated Metropolitan Asylums Board.

Chapter 8: Last years: the Metropolitan Poor Act, 1867.

The minutes of the East London Guardians' meetings in the 1860's are less varied in their characteristics than at their formation. The dull hand of central directive had curbed initiative and enthusiasm. Energetic men seeking influence and a challenge had been absorbed by the Boards of Works established in 1855 under the central direction of the Metropolitan Board of Works. 'Public Health' had become a matter of sanitary engineering, clean water and fragrant air.⁷⁶⁰ Men interested in the relations between poverty, social justice and health care had been sidelined or converted to the religion of sewers and fine buildings, leaving the Guardians to mop up the spillage of human frailty.

Hamlin places the blame for this squarely on Edwin Chadwick's shoulders. Rather than tackle the taproot cause of urban disease, that is poverty, Chadwick and his cronies concentrated on one issue, clean water, and refused to get diverted into the wider debate on the causes of urban squalor.⁷⁶¹ Doctors imbued with revolutionary fervour like John Simon in the City, John Tripe in Hackney, Robert Barnes in Shoreditch and John Liddle in Whitechapel abandoned their parish 'primary care' role to be employed by the local Boards of Works. In London pauper children were shipped out of town to large residential schools in the newer suburbs such as Norwood and Enfield. The Metropolitan Guardians were left with the sick and the mad.

Hanwell was full; Colney Hatch was full; the lunatic merry-go-round was in constant danger of seizing up. "There is excessive pressure for accommodation at all Metropolitan licensed houses receiving paupers, which have been constantly filled to their utmost limits."⁷⁶² The old Lunacy Commissioners' cry for more, more, more lunatic places was never satisfied.⁷⁶³ East London Guardians coped with the burgeoning numbers of mentally dependent paupers by expanding their own workhouses, building new separate workhouse infirmaries as decreed by the Poor Law Board in 1863 and by energetic tracking off 'relieved' and 'recovered' patients through the county asylums and licensed houses, to ensure no-one occupied a place a week longer than was necessary.

Even so, by the mid-1860s, most unions were sending pauper lunatics to a dozen or more asylums outside London. Hackney for example was using 25 different asylums in the late 1860s, 16 County or Borough Asylums outside London and 6 private Licensed houses, Portsmouth Borough Asylum at Milton being the furthest from London.⁷⁶⁴ Hackney did not rationalise its use of out-of-county placements until the 1880s, when they finally decided to contract a block of beds from the Three Counties Asylum at Baldock.⁷⁶⁵

The Commissioners in Lunacy reluctantly agreed in 1868 to increase the licence numbers at Hoxton House and Camberwell, to accommodate another 45 paupers but this barely touched the metropolitan 'problem'.⁷⁶⁶ In their 1859 Report to the Select Committee on Lunacy, the Commissioners had recommended that as an alternative to expanding the expensive, curative County Asylum system,

erection of inexpensive buildings adapted for the idiotic, chronic and harmless patients, in direct connexion with, or at a convenient distance from, the existing institutions. These auxiliary asylums... would be intermediate between union workhouses and the principal curative asylums.⁷⁶⁷

Shaftesbury had in mind that these new asylums would fall under the control of the Justices and the provisions of the Lunacy Act. The 1862 Act was the parliamentary response to the Select Committee Inquiries of 1859-60. While originally established to investigate a number of highly publicised cases of apparently sane people being unjustifiably confined in asylums, the Committee was soon persuaded that the really pressing issue in the care of lunatics was the difficulty in meeting the demand for asylum places.^{768 769}

The 1862 Act disappointed the Commission by sanctioning the transfer of the harmless chronically insane from the curative asylums to workhouses. As a consolation prize the Commission was given powers to remove lunatics from workhouses to asylums when they considered it necessary, a power they would need to use sparingly. A year later in the Amending Act of 1863 the Commissioners were also awarded a veto over the transfer of lunatics to workhouses in the event of the workhouse having unsatisfactory facilities.⁷⁷⁰ Transfers could not be arranged solely by the Guardians. The Committee of

Asylum Visitors had to make the formal application, a safeguard against the wholesale removal of patients from asylums as a cost-reducing exercise.

The 1862 Act was the first breach of the Lunacy Commission's treasured principle that all insane patients should be removed from the control of the Poor Law Authorities to the protection of the Justices and the Lunacy Act. Until then the Commission had assumed it was merely a matter of time and sufficient expenditure by the Justices before all mentally dependent people were transferred out of the control of the Guardians. Neither the Guardians nor the Lunacy Commission were pleased with the 1862 Act because it appeared to encourage workhouses to turn into small lunatic asylums. The Poor Law Board tried to reassure the Guardians that this was not intended.⁷⁷¹ Already a quarter or so pauper lunatics declared on the Annual Returns were maintained in local workhouses, it seemed likely that an even higher proportion would be left there in the future.

Gathorne-Hardy, the newly appointed President of the Poor Law Board, noted with some alarm in 1866 that the London workhouses contained among the 14,000 "old and infirm" including 50 children and 2,000 adults classed as insane.⁷⁷² He regarded these highly dependent paupers with specialised needs as an unfortunate cause of the overcrowding which lay at the root of most workhouse evils. Gathorne-Hardy cleverly presented his plans for the creation of "auxiliary asylums" as an endorsement of the Lunacy Commission's recommendation. In effect however the new institutions were to be administered not by the Justices but by a new organisation, a District Asylums Board, a hybrid creature ingeniously designed to incorporate local representation elected from the Boards of Guardians but with a healthy core of 15 central Poor Law Board nominees.

Gathorne-Hardy had served as a Guardian in a Kent union and was sensitive to parochial autonomy. He admitted that "the role of Guardian is one of great difficulty and delicacy".⁷⁷³ The Metropolitan Poor Bill was primarily designed to address the pressing political demands for decent infirmaries for the 21,000 sick paupers in metropolitan workhouses and the recurrent outbreaks of smallpox, cholera and other fevers. The Bill proposed an entirely new system of medical governance for London that effectively

imposed central control over planning but appeared to provide safeguards on local government autonomy. The chief improvements required were greater cubic space per person (an expert Cubic Space Committee came up with remarkably specific square footage required for each disease type^a), increased ventilation and a better classification of the sick and poor generally. Lunatics, children over two, fever and smallpox cases were to be removed altogether to new institutions under the management of a central body. All other sick paupers would be provided for in separate workhouse infirmaries in the local district, which would be under the direction of asylum district committees accountable to the new central Board.

The new Metropolitan Common Poor Fund was understandably popular in the East End since the burden of Poor Relief was to be apportioned between parishes and unions on a proportional basis more evenly according to demand. While the cherished link between local rates and local relief was to be severed, this was highly advantageous to impoverished areas. Since the Common Poor Fund would bear centrally the costs of maintaining infectious and insane patients not only in the new asylums but also in county asylums and private licensed houses, significant potential was created for shifting the cost burden. No wonder the rate of 'insanity' rose dramatically in London over the next few years. Many who would previously have been carted off to the workhouse 'refractory' wards could be re-labelled with the approval of the Lunacy Commissioners and handed over to become a charge on the Common budget. The Common Fund was available to all paupers with a medical certificate declaring that "the pauper is a chronic and harmless lunatic, idiot or imbecile". No wonder it was popular with the Guardians.⁷⁷⁴ The imbecile asylums did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Lunatics Acts for the purposes of certification of patients. The expense and inconvenience of hiring a doctor external to the workhouse to give an opinion and then petitioning the magistrate, the required procedure for a county lunatic asylum, was made simpler. In its place, certification for the imbecile asylums required a simple triple declaration by a relieving officer, the workhouse or district medical officer and a Guardian, that the pauper fitted the criteria for admission.⁷⁷⁵ It was all too easy. At the

^a 850 cubic feet for surgical cases, 300 for general, 1200 for maternity, 2000 for fever and smallpox, 1200 for offensive cases and so on.

same time, the Poor Law Board had acquired a mechanism for coercing the Guardians into acceding to other central demands through the operation of their powers to veto all capital expenditure through the new board.

Gathorne-Hardy's Bill was ingenious and politically astute. In reality it chained the Guardians to central imperatives but at the same time it created the impression of greater Guardian participation in central decision making; a brilliant piece of administrative sleight-of-hand. The Guardians did not want any further expansion of the county asylum system under the current arrangements, which they thought expensive and beyond their influence. The one or two Justices ex-officio on all the Boards of Guardians were not perceived to represent the ratepayers' interests in the meetings of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions. The proposed arrangements provided for the erection of new cheaper institutions and gave the Guardians the notion that they were retaining some control over policy and costs.

The Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 was a serious blow to the Lunacy Commissioners. The Bill was clearly designed to sidestep the Lunatics Act and stop the Justices widening their influence over matters of lunacy.⁷⁷⁶ Shaftesbury protested to Gathorne-Hardy, pointing out that under the 1845 Act the two central inspectorates "shared the power of making regulations applicable to Lunatic Wards in workhouses....no arrangements can be made without the concurrent approval of both Boards."⁷⁷⁷

Under the Metropolitan Poor Bill District Asylums are to be considered workhouses within the Lunacy Acts. Powers given to (Lunacy) Commissioners would practically cease to exist...District asylums will be filled with insane inmates over whom or for their proper accommodation and care the Lunacy Commissioners will have no authority whatever.

That of course was precisely what Gathorne-Hardy planned. Shaftesbury was a poor political negotiator, naively candid and trusting. He won arguments by sheer force of his assumed moral superiority. In an ambiguous moral situation such as this he floundered, lacking the intellect and capacity for deviousness to plot tactics. Shaftesbury walked round to Somerset House with his letter of protest to see Gathorne-Hardy in person. The formal response, a straight put-down, came from the Poor Law Board Secretary, Earle.

The Board intended to have oversight of the new institutions and there would therefore be ample oversight, that the inmates would be “harmless” anyway and that the Lunacy Commissioners could visit and the Board “would be pleased to receive reports as now”.⁷⁷⁸

The Commission had gradually acquired more influence over workhouses, sometimes through sparingly used public exposure of the inadequacies of Poor Law Inspectors’ oversight of the insane, a strategy used successfully for example with the Guardians of St George Hanover Square in 1854.⁷⁷⁹ Influence was one thing; executive powers another. The Commissioners had few sanctions over Guardians compared with the substantial executive powers they had acquired over Public Asylums and Licensed Houses, for example in their right to inspect records, dictate what statistics should be produced, exercise the power to discharge and transfer.⁷⁸⁰ During the cholera epidemic of 1853 the Lunacy Commissioners had been granted powers to order Asylums to make alterations to buildings, linen, supplies, diet and every aspect of the regime in order to contain the spread of the epidemic. They had no such direct powers over institutions administered under the Poor Law.

Shaftesbury particularly objected to the new institutions being called ‘asylums’. Most of the planned institutions were to be sick infirmaries for fever and smallpox; surely the imbecile asylums should “not be confounded with or in practice deemed and treated as analogous or equivalent to Lunatic Asylums under the Lunacy Acts”. Gathorne-Hardy ignored him.⁷⁸¹ The word ‘hospital’ was not used by the Metropolitan Asylums Board as a suitable description of any of its institutions until after the turn of the century. Asylum connoted a pauper institution, hospital implied that people of all classes would be admitted. The Board wanted inmates to appreciate their pauper status.⁷⁸²

Two huge cheap imbecile asylums were built by the Asylums Board, one south of the river at Caterham, Surrey and one in the north at Leavesden, Hertfordshire. Designed to take 1500 paupers each they were of course rapidly expanded to absorb the free-for-all created by the Common Poor Fund. Within five years they together had nearly 4000

beds. Architecturally featureless, barrack like, symmetrical blocks of identical wards, these warehouses stand as a testament to mean-spirited committee thrift.

Reorganisation.

The Act of 1867 was followed by a series of structural changes to the metropolitan parishes and unions designed to create organisations of sufficient size to make efficient use of existing workhouses and sustain the new district sick infirmaries. While some Boards of Guardians, like St George in the East, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Shoreditch remained under a single Board of Guardians, others, like Holborn, Strand and Westminster united to become Holborn Union in 1868 and were joined by St Pancras a year later^b. Poplar and Stepney remained separate Boards but united to build the new infirmary at Bow^c under the auspices of the Metropolitan Asylums Board as one of the six short-lived new asylum districts.

The separation of the acutely ill into new infirmary buildings following the 1867 Act had a profound effect for the next century on the quality of care received by the old, frail, chronic sick and demented. The new workhouse infirmaries became general hospitals. The chronic sick and old were left behind in the grimmer old workhouses, together with manageable epileptics, severely disabled accident victims, those with degenerative disease, the quietly mentally infirm who would look misplaced in the old county or new Metropolitan Asylums, even allowing for the widening admission criteria of the latter. Workhouse inmates received a poorer quality of care, had less staff and very few doctors or trained nurses. The development of the 'hospital service' barely touched the old workhouses, which remained dumping grounds for the decrepit long after the 1948 NHS Act.

^b The new Holborn Union built a grandiose new infirmary on Highgate Hill, a cross between a yellow brick French chateau and five-storey warehouse, now called the Whittington Hospital.

^c Poplar and Stepney District Sick Asylum, now St Andrew's Hospital Bow was built opposite the 1863 workhouse only 6 feet from the Commercial Railway. The current Portering Manager, aware that the building will close soon, has for some years been collecting memorabilia and an archive of the institution for a museum for the replacement hospital.

The new Mile End Guardians are the only ones whose minutes project a sense of enthusiasm and energy in the 1860s. Their new workhouse was exemplary and almost as well fitted up with sanitary facilities as the City's Bow Institution. Other unions slid into mediocrity. Stepney, once in the vanguard, was now pedestrian. The elderly 'eighteenth century' gentlemen of St George in the East who had made free with the poor rates in such philanthropic style in the early days after the Amendment Act were long gone. Their vast workhouse was dilapidated and ill cared for; the imbecile wards had no windows and the old women sweltered directly under the roof in a hot summer.⁷⁸³

Under the chairmanship of William Turner, the Hackney Guardians of 1865-70 were better organised compared with their predecessors of twenty years earlier.⁷⁸⁴ Their preoccupation with the stone-yard had thankfully waned. Hackney gentry were less in evidence and none of the old names were regular attenders. About a dozen members managed the work of the sub-committees; a querulous bunch with strong views, they often fell out with each other and the clerk, raised ludicrous points of order and took tedious unnecessary votes on matters of little consequence.⁷⁸⁵ Mr Kebbell and the Reverend J Gooding could be predicted to be on the opposite sides of any vote.

Hackney had an innovative Lunacy Committee, a sub-committee of the main Board chaired by Gooding. It considered all matters relating to imbeciles, new lunacy legislation, visited the imbecile and lunatic wards and generally had oversight of the Guardians responsibilities in this area but they visited Colney Hatch and Hanwell only once a year, the statutory minimum. In April 1868 the sub-committee considered whether to remove all the imbeciles in the workhouse to a separate establishment, chewing over the optimistic notion that the Poor Law Board would approve their recouping the capital costs from the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund lately established under the 1867 Act.⁷⁸⁶ Hackney Guardians got the idea that the new Act would allow **them** to build new imbecile asylums. They did not grasp at first that the Act annexed the Guardians' powers to build asylums to the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The Guardians had nominees on the new Board but the local Boards of Guardians had relatively little influence over decisions; they could exercise their muscle only through

collective action with other Guardians and there was precious little experience of collaborative working between unions.

Hackney workhouse and infirmary buildings were poorly maintained. Lax recruitment of poorly paid and indifferent personnel created perennial problems of retaining satisfactory numbers of workhouse staff. Ann Ward, the imbecile attendant, came back “intoxicated with her clothes ruined” after escorting a patient to Colney Hatch and was duly sacked.⁷⁸⁷ The following year John Brand the male side imbecile keeper was dismissed for striking Fred Hicks and cutting his eye. The stone-yard superintendent had nipped into the ward to borrow a newspaper and witnessed the incident, reporting it immediately to the Master.⁷⁸⁸ The Guardians whined to the Poor Law Inspector that it was difficult to get good staff. “You pay too little” was the succinct but ignored response.

Dr Bendt Hovell^d often complained about facilities for lunatics and imbeciles in he workhouse. “They have no superintendence;.. they want employment. If the Master attends to this then other arrangements are frustrated;..they frequently become dangerous...there is no proper female ward and the superintendence of the female side is unsatisfactory”.⁷⁸⁹ Hovell’s letter to the Guardians was triggered by the attempted suicide in the workhouse of a patient waiting for removal to an asylum. Hovell resigned on 23 May 1866 after 21 years as union doctor. He left a glowing testimonial for his nurse, Mrs Hitchcock.⁷⁹⁰ Hovell and his union colleagues never achieved the influence in Hackney that the Whitechapel and Stepney doctors did. Perhaps they lacked persuasiveness or necessary force of personality, or perhaps the shambolic Hackney Guardians just were not very responsive. More noise was generated round about this time by the first Medical Officer of Health Dr Tripe, who enthusiastically took up the challenge to tackle ‘nuisances’ like Mr Redwood’s smelly gelatine factory that spewed out noxious fumes of putrefying carcasses.⁷⁹¹

The shortage of asylum facilities drove the trend to briefer periods of admission. Specialist placements were made for short periods only while patients were at their most

unmanageable and then returned as quickly as possible to the workhouse. The 'revolving door' that characterised late twentieth century psychiatric hospital practice was already in slow motion in the late 1860's. Ann Child, 68, a simple woman with spells of insanity was admitted to the workhouse from Colney Hatch Asylum on 21 September 1868 along with two others.⁷⁹² She was part of a swap of six coming out and five going in from the workhouse that same week. In the next two years there were several major swaps of up to ten people at a time from the Union to the Asylum. Ann either proved too difficult to manage or had a further episode of disorder. The following April Ann was sent back to Colney Hatch but stayed only a few weeks before being declared "fit for discharge". The workhouse staff did not want her back however, so she was sent to Aubin's private asylum in Camberwell, frequently used by Hackney then as an over-spill asylum. Ann did not stay long there but was transferred back to the workhouse with nine others in March 1870. Poor Ann still wasn't allowed to settle. Nine months later she was one of the first Hackney patients to be admitted to the brand new imbecile asylum at Leavesden, that monstrous drab blot on the Hertfordshire landscape. And there she remained.⁷⁹³

Hackney's chaotic workhouse, Colney Hatch Asylum, Aubin's or the vast warehouse at Leavesden; which was the best option from Ann's unsought point of view? Aubin's^e private asylum got consistently satisfactory reports from the Lunacy Commissioners during the late 1860s, better than Colney Hatch and physically more comfortable than Leavesden.⁷⁹⁴ Classified as lunatic, reclassified as imbecile, Ann Child might well have been placed at the beginning of the century at a pauper farm for the idiotic and refractory. As the budgetary advantage to the purchaser moved from a parochial solution to a central bureaucratic one, so Ann and hundreds like her moved with the money from one institutional venue to another as her mental state waxed and waned.

At least if Ann's family wanted to visit her she was in the vicinity of London. More than 1000 Metropolitan paupers were in far distant asylums by 1870, at a cost of between 14s and 17s 6d per week, a cost significantly greater than Colney Hatch (10s 2¼d), Hanwell

^d This is the same Hovell as twenty years earlier but the name Bendt was added later

^e **Aubin** also ran a huge pauper school at Norwood used by several metropolitan unions

(10s 6d first quarter, 10s 9½d subsequent quarters) and about the same as the Metropolitan Licensed Houses.⁷⁹⁵ The pattern of care in the Metropolis was beginning to diverge from the rest of England and Wales. The financial inducement offered by the Common Poor Fund "has greatly contributed to swell the removals from workhouses to asylums."⁷⁹⁶ The increase in inmates of unsound mind in workhouses, the Lunacy Commissioners noted "has been entirely in the provincial workhouses and especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire. In the Metropolitan district there has been a decrease owing to the removal of large numbers to the provincial county asylums."⁷⁹⁷ The Metropolitan unions did not wait for the imbecile asylums to be built before taking advantage of the new financial inducements provided by the Common Poor Fund.

The arrival of the imbecile asylums was generally welcomed by the Lunacy Commissioners as an improvement on workhouse wards even though they disapproved of their falling outwith the Lunatics Act. "We are nevertheless strongly of the opinion that the relief afforded by the opening of the two Metropolitan District Asylums referred to will not dispense with the necessity of erecting without delay a third county asylum for Middlesex".⁷⁹⁸ In spite of the enthusiasm with which the eastern metropolitan unions grasped the Common Poor Fund, the impoverished East End contributed by far the largest number to those identified in Middlesex as still without the benefit of an asylum, either in a workhouse or at home. Poplar Union, still out on a limb promoting home support with outdoor relief had 200 insane resident in the district of which 148 were at home with their families. Mile End Old Town supported 29 at home, Stepney, Whitechapel and the City of London a handful more.⁷⁹⁹ The majority of eastern unions retained their insane wards. In 1870 there were 500 or so insane in local workhouses and workhouse infirmaries, most destined for the imbecile asylums but some waiting for a vacancy in a local county asylum. The enticing Common Poor Fund was like a bottomless barrel of good wine waiting to be poured as soon as the table was set. The best way for the Guardians to take full advantage of it was to give their fullest support to more asylums of every possible description.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: the Victory of Centralism

All who have read and can think must now have full confidence that the endless progression, ever increasing in rapidity of which the poets sang, is the destined lot of the human race.

Leader, *The Economist* 4 January 1851.⁸⁰⁰

The geographical pattern of sick institutions that the Guardians and the Metropolitan Asylums Board dotted so liberally over the East End between 1863 and 1875 still dictates where residents of East London are treated by the National Health Service in the year 2000. The old poor law overseers of the socially unfortunate had been reconfigured as managers of pauperism by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 but by 1870 had been transformed again into managers of illness. From being primarily concerned with the 'problem' of the workless and destitute, by 1870 the East London Boards of Guardians were predominantly 'hospital' and 'medical services' authorities concerned with the care and welfare of physically and mentally dependent local residents.

General workhouses had expanded but were full of the aged poor and non-working 'borderline incompetent' folk. Separate infirmaries for the sick had been built or soon would be, in "an absolute epidemic" of asylum and hospital building, buildings constructed Joseph Rogers said, with "complete ignorance of the necessary details for economical building" as if "architects, surveyors and builders should be at liberty to extract all the money they wanted".^{801 802} The new infirmaries were impressive, not so the cheap utilitarian imbecile asylums. Lunatics, who had been ascribed by the Lunacy Commission a superior moral worth among the generality of paupers, were not special cases any more. The physically ill pauper now took precedence for capital resources and revenue funds.

^a **Rogers** was the workhouse doctor in Strand Union, a famously sacked whistleblower, veteran campaigner for better workhouse conditions in the 50s and 60s and leader of the Poor Law Medical Officers. Founder member in 1866, at a dinner at his home, with Kay Shuttleworth, Dickens, J S Mill, and the Lancet Commission doctors of the Association for Improving Workhouse Infirmaries. Rogers said he was "always in dread of a horrid catastrophe" in the male insane wards of the Strand workhouse (Rogers 1859 op cit p5).

Over the course of the nineteenth century mentally ill 'East-Enders' were increasingly classified, rounded up, tidied away and shipped off. The old poor law parish trustees, poring over individual problems, mithering about the expense and inconvenience of managing specific cases, had motives far less readily categorised than the remote Metropolitan Asylums Board. The overseers did at least see and listen to the individuals whose lives they dictated and came face to face with their relatives. Lees rightly identifies the personal contact between pauper petitioner and administrator conducted in a public forum as the heart of the process of social bargaining under the old poor law.⁸⁰³ If those early parish officers could be off-hand, sniffy and thoughtlessly neglectful, the arbitrariness of their decision-making had the merit of variability and thus the possibility of a lucky outcome. A lunatic took his chances in a neighbourhood system where kindness and good judgment were frequently on offer but discomfiting harshness might well be just around the next workhouse ward door.

The unpredictability of the system had been extinguished by 1871. The insane or mentally frail could be certain of being consigned to a dull regimented whitewashed ward in the archipelago of featureless, cheap institutions far removed from the trials of survival in the urban ocean. Administrative mediocrity and uniformity had replaced parochial diversity as the context of care. This final chapter examines how, during a century of unprecedented optimism about the improvability of the human condition, the shift in the locus of power during the development of a central administration and regulation system promoted a regime peculiarly ill-suited to personal health and social services for mentally disordered people.

The Treatment of Insanity. Before exploring these themes further something must be said about the medical care and treatment of lunatics during the nineteenth century. The term 'psychiatry' was not in common usage until the end of the century but the profession of mad-doctoring as a branch of medicine was well established by 1800.⁸⁰⁴ The profession was monopolised by apothecaries, surgeons and physicians after the Madhouse Act of 1828 introduced a requirement for licensed houses to employ a visiting doctor.⁸⁰⁵

Neither the Trustees of the Poor nor the Guardians explored what exactly was done to pauper patients by a parish doctor or by the surgeon or apothecary at the licensed houses and asylums where they sent mad paupers. Apart from the occasion when Bethnal Green Guardians declared themselves pleased with their treatment of lunatics (see page 156) and debates in 1846 triggered by the Poor Law Commission's enquiries about the use of mechanical restraints, there is scarcely a mention of the technicalities of medical treatment of the insane. Administrators managed the money and were interested in those aspects of care that influenced cost, that is the number and choice of placements. Clinical care was not their business, although they did regard the physical environment and general daily regime as their concern.

Medicines tended to be prescribed in culinary style - a pinch of this and a cautious drop of that; a small dose of tartrate of antimony, hyoscyamus, camphor, morphia, cooling lotions to the head, blisters to the nape of the neck in moderation, a little cannabis indica. Some alienists however favoured the more 'heroic' administration of debilitating doses of calomel (mercury), purgatives, opiates and other sedatives and blood letting. Detailed treatment regimes for mania and melancholia submitted by asylum medical superintendents were documented in the Lunacy Commissioners' Annual Report of 1847.⁸⁰⁶ Physical assaults on the wayward psyche through baths and head douches and some eccentric machinery attracted transient enthusiasm in the first years of the century but had largely been abandoned by 1840. Dr Monro favoured mustard baths to the feet; Sir Alexander Morison thought laxatives of all kinds worth a try; Dr Bucknill thought nothing was superior to leeches. A number of the 'star' alienists of the nineteenth century however set little store by medicines as curative. TH Monro, Prichard, Conolly and later Maudsley were all sceptics.⁸⁰⁷ In East London some of the parish and union doctors, Parkinson, Byles, Ross for example, were clearly treating mental disorder with specific prescriptions but no record was kept of what they favoured. Obligated to supply medicines out of their own pockets, there is no surviving official account.

Much asylum care was directed to preventing suicide, keeping clothing on, promoting sleep, adequate nutrition and dealing with incontinence and violent behaviour.

Throwing off or tearing clothes and 'dirty habits' were common. The more important development in the care of insanity in the nineteenth century was the adoption of 'non-restraint', the rejection of mechanical restraints to control violent and excited behaviour. 'Non-restraint' had its origins in the 'moral treatment', an approach in which fear and physical coercion were substituted by firm kindness, mental coercion and paternalistic didacticism, notions on which Tuke had founded the Retreat at York.⁸⁰⁸ Bynum stresses that moral treatment provided an attitudinal context in which the treatment of mental disorder continued to be viewed by alienists as essentially physical in origin.⁸⁰⁹ It was not an alternative but an adjunct to physical therapies. Conolly and the Middlesex Magistrates were the drivers of an ideology that was proselytized nationwide from 1840 to 1860 by the Lunacy Commissioners. The Middlesex magistrates were crucial supporters (see Appendix C, Three Middlesex Magistrates). Hanwell was the first and largest of the county asylums to declare a policy of non-restraint.^b Conolly's preference was to use short-term seclusion and higher staffing levels. The political battle to implement the ideology has been well told by Suzuki and Scull.⁸¹⁰ Exposure to Conolly and Begley's high moral tone certainly influenced the Whitechapel doctors and through them the Guardians. Conolly's regular letters of complaint about the arrival of restrained or bound admissions from workhouses probably improved the aspirations of other unions in East London too.

A surprisingly high proportion of parish and union doctors' time was devoted to the care of mentally disordered people before the advent of imbecile asylums. A quarter to a third of workhouse residents was mentally dependent so parish and early union doctors regarded mental illness as their business. The creation of the Metropolitan Asylums Board achieved the removal of chronic cases to vast institutions out of town and the Magistrates removed the acutely disturbed as soon as possible from the workhouse. As a consequence, union doctors lost much of their diagnostic and sorting role with the mentally ill and practically all treatment and care of long term cases.

^b Hanwell reinstated mechanical devices later in the nineteenth century. A collection can be seen in the Museum at West London Mental Health Trust in the old Hanwell Asylum Chapel.

The Old Poor Law Period 1800-1834. Marshall's key characteristics of the old poor law^{c811} are evident in the way the eastern metropolitan parishes managed the insanity problem before 1834.⁸¹² First, the small unit of administration meant that the parish had only feeble finances and any unusual burden on the relief budget, as occurred in the period 1815-21 and the early 1830s, had a catastrophic effect on the ability of the poorest parishes to administer poor relief effectively. It also allowed individual officials like Coste in Shoreditch to become petty despots. On the other hand, the old system had both humanity and flexibility. The handful of insane 'cases' that each overseer and later, the paid assistant, had to deal with annually meant that each was handled on its merits. Inconsistency of practice also allowed adaptability; if the quality of care or costs of a specialist institution changed in an unattractive way, then it was a relatively simple matter to move paupers elsewhere.

Marshall's second characteristic, adherence to the tenets of the 1601 'Act of Elizabeth' that each parish should look after its own, embodied in the settlement rules, were a great advantage to the insane. There might be a lot of argument and buck-passing until a settlement was established but once it was, there was no escaping the responsibility to make appropriate arrangements for care. These positive aspects of settlement, while recognised as providing universal entitlement to assistance have been largely ignored in twentieth century debates about the impact of the rules on the mobility of labour. The settlement rules were generally unpopular with the poor, although King and Lees have recently revived the respectability of the notion of settlement and provide evidence of the reassurance the regulations gave to those hovering between destitution and independence.⁸¹³

The Contribution of Pauper Farms to the Care of Lunatics in London. The Metropolis was unusual in having a workhouse classification system in place long before the new poor law introduced it as ideology. Pauper farms have largely been excluded from earlier debates, yet were a crucial part of the provider system for managing some

^c Marshall 's key characteristics of the old poor law were 1. An inflexibly small budget 2. Adherence to the settlement rules 3. Legislation codified existing practice. 4 Geographical diversity of practice **Marshall JD 1968 The Old Poor Law 1795-1834. London, Macmillan, 12**

species of mentally incompetent poor in the metropolis up to 1834. The London pauper farms were part of a continuum of types of refuge which also included the licensed houses, refractory and idiot wards of parish workhouses, houseless refuges for casuals and local prisons. The shift away from pauper farms to private asylums for lunatic placements in the first two decades of the century probably reflects what Porter identifies as the emergence of a "cadre of specialist entrepreneurs of madness" and increasing willingness of the overseers to regard madness as requiring special expertise that could only be had in asylums.⁸¹⁴ Funding systems and revenue cost comparisons with workhouses closed the City pauper farms that took the foolish and simple unproductive pauper and transferred their clients to the asylum. When Edward Byas could not get sufficient paupers of this type, he turned to the lunatic trade to fill the gap. Then, when he could no longer compete financially with the county asylum system Byas lost most of his union trade and had to turn to the military. Porter's eighteenth century melting pot of commercial competition, soaring scientific ambitions and polygon world of personal motives and flexible public rules survived until the language of entitlement, rights and contractual commitments of the old poor law gave way to the rhetoric of virtue, vice and exclusion under the new.

The Birth of County Asylums. The first county asylums were no larger and usually considerably smaller than the existing pauper madhouses used by the parishes. Smith suggests that the early public asylums were a natural development of embryonic quasi-public hospitals like St Luke's and Bethlem rather than a new phenomenon.⁸¹⁵ Porter had also concluded there was greater continuity of customs in managing the mad between the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than was generally acknowledged.⁸¹⁶ Smith's study of the county asylums created under the 1808 Act points to the difficulties the new asylums had in finding a place in a market economy of parish purchasers, private providers and voluntary hospitals.⁸¹⁷ When Hanwell opened in 1831, even though Bethlem was fast removing itself from the pauper market, the new Middlesex asylum was hardly well placed to compete with the long established local licensed houses and St Luke's Hospital. The flexible charging system whereby parishes 'topped-up' family resources to fund places in St Luke's or a licensed house was an added bonus of the old system. Hanwell only became an acceptable alternative when the

cost dropped significantly below the licensed houses. Local scandals seem to have made remarkably little difference to the overall use of the private sector; cost was the prevalent determinant until the 1845 Act made the use of county asylums obligatory. For the Overseers of the Poor in East London the new County Asylum at Hanwell was by no means the obvious preferred choice in the mixed economy of care between 1808 and 1845. My findings concur with those of Melling and Forsythe⁸¹⁸ for Devon and Smith for the Midlands that county asylums had to compete for trade largely on price but also by astute marketing of the advantages of an asylum over the private trade.

The New Poor Law Guardians. One of the main aims of the Poor Law Amendment Act was to impose national consistency of practice in poor relief, geographical variation being the last of Marshall's old poor law characteristics.⁸¹⁹ Central guidance should have produced uniformity in dealing with the mad. But if there were striking differences between the two neighbouring Holborn parishes of rigid St Andrew's and generous St Sepulchre prior to the Amendment Act, there were equally striking differences in the decade after the Act between the treatment meted out by sage Stepney, punitive Poplar and generous St George.

The high cost of placing individuals in special asylums had the positive effect of obliging the first new poor law Guardians to consider individual paupers and their families just as their predecessors had. However, once the responsibility for making judgements on where to send people was removed from the Guardians by the obligation to use the county asylums there was less reason to consider cases in such depth. The capital solution of building county asylums tied the Guardians into an inflexible system that while it had the merit of being cheap per individual case at the outset, proved expensive in the long term.

The importance and complexity of the poor law in the process of institutionalisation in all its forms have been recognised only recently. Bartlett points out that the poor law was the bedrock on which the top tier of poor law administration, the Justices of the Peace built the county asylum system.⁸²⁰ Bartlett's work on the complex relations in Leicestershire and Rutland between the Justices, the Guardians, the asylum

administrators and patients' families resonates with Forsythe, Melling and Adair's reading of the shifting nuances of administrative power at the Devon asylum.⁸²¹ Melling's group concluded that the axis of power was balanced between the magistrates and poor law officials, the Lunacy Commission playing only a small part.⁸²² Walton's study of the admission process in Lancashire and Wright's on discharges from the Buckinghamshire Asylum also stressed the role of poor law officials in the lunatics' life career.^{823 824} A similarly complex picture emerges from the early days of the new poor law period in East London where the Guardians' officials and parish doctors clearly regarded the union pauper lunatics as 'theirs'. Pauper lunatics might be 'on loan' to the County Asylum or to the Asylum on the Green; the Guardians might take advice from the Asylum doctors on discharge, although they might not, and the Lunacy Commissioners were nothing like as much trouble to them as they might have feared.

The tussle of wills between the Guardians' officials and doctors on one side and the county asylums officers and governing committee on the other, played out over the disposal of pauper lunatics, reflected parish resentment at the justices' greater powers and generous budget creamed off from their own resources without their sanction. 'Dangerousness' was the language of negotiation used by all interested parties in East London to convince others of the need to act. Adair, Forsythe and Melling have remarked on the importance of the concept of 'dangerousness' as an admission bargaining criterion between poor law officials, doctors and asylum staff in the Devon County Asylum.⁸²⁵ Danger was also the thread that runs through the old parish minutes and right through the Guardians' deliberations in East London up to the 1850s. Overseers and Guardians attempted to match expense to the pauper's perceived level of dangerousness and behavioural nuisance.^{d826}

The Lunacy Commission and the Guardians. Debates about whether the Commission was effective or influential as an inspectorate depend on whether the question pertains to their local visitorial or central policy role. Hervey set the Commission's work within the context of changing conceptions of the role of government, the development of a central

^d The negotiating language of dangerousness is just as important today in determining which of a tier of heirarchically funded units will be the placement of choice for mentally disordered people.

administrative bureaucracy and the rise of supervisory central agencies designed to oversee and 'police' the implementation of central government policy through local government.⁸²⁷ Hervey judged the Commissioners were effective locally in Kent in their early years, within the narrow confines of their remit.⁸²⁸ Mellett thought their remit so constrained it prevented them doing very much at all and Bartlett found their role to be largely conciliatory and weak in the East Midlands.^{829 830} Forsythe, Melling and Adair in contrast found the Commission "authoritative and successful" in Devon.⁸³¹

Local Commissioners had only as much influence as individual members could exert through force of personality, negotiating skill and tenacity. In East London some like Foster, Gaskell and Mylne seem to have been quite effective, others such as Turner and Campbell less so. Commissioners were generally far more constrained in their relationships with poor law officials and guardians about conditions in workhouses than with public asylums and magistrates. They failed miserably to get major improvements in insane wards of the eastern metropolitan workhouses compared with the journalistic 'Lancet Commission'. Shaftesbury however had sufficient standing and parliamentary clout to ensure that for twenty-five years the collective Commission influenced central government aspirations and the central ideology of care. Ultimately though, the Commission's aspirations to annexe the universe of imbeciles to their lunatic empire ran aground, although their annual reports set the moral tone and care standards for a generation of asylums.

The growth of public asylums. While it is clear that first the Middlesex magistrates, then central government in the form of the Poor Law Board gradually appropriated the care of the insane in the metropolis, the old mixed economy system survived far longer than has been recognised. The East London licensed houses played an important and respected part in the grand scheme until the last years of the nineteenth century and very often received better reports from the Commissioners than the county asylums. The transition from private to public provision occurred in step-wise fashion, the private sector quick to adopt new strategies as old markets were denied them. Ultimately public providers triumphed because the legislature was on their side.

Jones,⁸³² whose work has done so much to enthuse recent generations of psychiatrists and social workers, and her American 'Whig' counterpart Grob,⁸³³ interpret the 19th century development of public asylums as a moral triumph. Hunter and Macalpine⁸³⁴ took a similar line in their history of Colney Hatch but a more measured approach in other work. Others of a more sceptical persuasion such as Doerner,⁸³⁵ Mellett⁸³⁶ and most importantly Scull,⁸³⁷ while suspicious of the motives of public asylum supporters, nevertheless share with Jones a narrative featuring the progressive Victorian "transformation of the madhouse into the asylum into the mental hospital".^{838 839} For Doerner, 'sequestered unreason' represented the defeat of the impoverished idle insane by the industrious bourgeoisie.⁸⁴⁰

Scull describes an orderly shift from a chaotic, unregulated 'cottage industry' of madhouses to a comprehensive country-wide, state-provided and state-regulated system. "The asylum became almost the sole officially approved response to the problems posed by the mentally disordered; and the nature and limits of lunacy were transformed".⁸⁴¹ Scull used the asylum story to support his thesis, stated rather baldly, that the development of an efficient capitalist economy encouraged social conformity, especially in the growing manufacturing conurbations. The desire to work lead to reduced family tolerance of disruptive and disagreeable deviance and a desire to segregate those who might otherwise have been cared for at home by non-working relatives. 'Modified Scull', the version of events he modestly espoused at the 1997 Exeter conference,⁸⁴² proves safer than the original. He acknowledges the role of the poor law machinery but retains an interpretation of the rise of public asylums as a 'side effect' of the growing capitalist state in which the suspect motives of nineteenth century alienists aid and abet the state's convenience.

The story in East London fits Scull's interpretation only in part. It was not capitalism but the control of capital that was at the heart of shifting institutional policies. The use of huge, private sector pauper farms and madhouses was well established in metropolitan London by the mid-18th century. An institutional pattern of care and the early restriction of outdoor relief in many poorer London parishes established an

Graph 9.1: Insane Paupers as a Percentage of Chargeable Paupers, East London and England and Wales 1844-1880

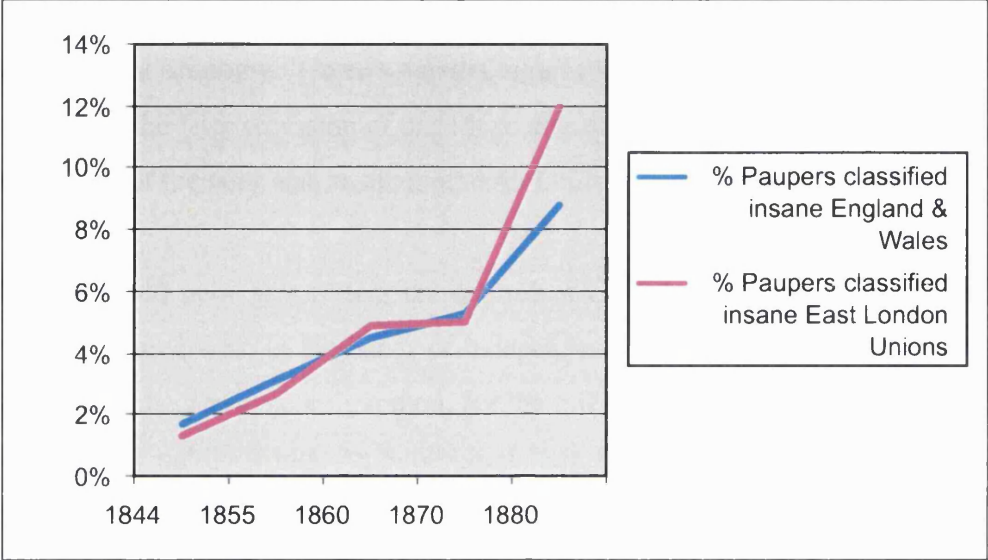
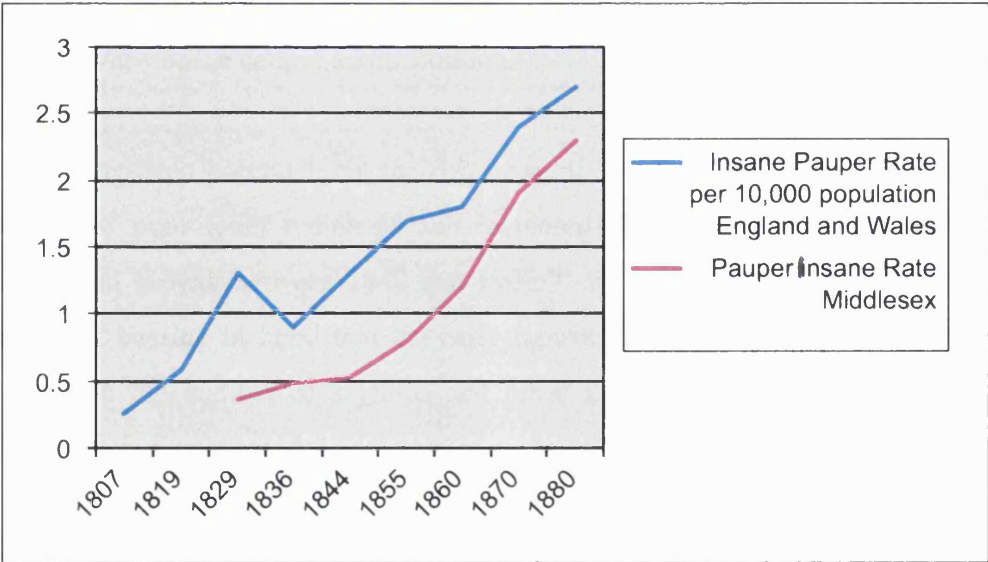


Fig Graph 9.2: Insane Pauper Rate per 10,000 Population in Middlesex and England and Wales



Figures above derived from Table D4 and D5, Appendix p401

'asylum' solution to managing diverse kinds of human incompetence long before the machinations of meddlesome magistrates. The burgeoning poor relief bill in London consequent upon economic recession after the Napoleonic wars had a more direct effect on the parishes' and unions' increasing resort to institutional solutions than the rise of the industrial economy. Green's parallel arguments for the transformation of 'artisans to paupers' in the later recession of the 1860s also stresses that an institutional response to the burden of the poor was an attempt to set limits on relief expenditure.⁸⁴³

Under the old poor law system the control of capital expenditure and the size of the capital resource were in the hands of independent madhouse entrepreneurs who largely determined the service configuration. By the mid-nineteenth century capital was readily available for public works. As Scull points out, this capital finance was the fruit of the burgeoning capitalist economy. The availability of capital allowed the magistrates and later the central government machine to invest in an attractively 'global' solution. The more remote from the lives of the mad and their families the agency where capital expenditure was controlled, the larger and cheaper the institutional solution. Emotional and geographical distance between the decision-makers and the recipients of the service facilitated an administrative solution that ignored local families', relieving officers' and union doctors' individually devised solutions and substituted instead 'benefits' from the point of view of the central administration.

It has long been accepted that the rise in numbers of detained lunatics outstripped the growth of poor relief recipients and increased at a rate beyond that expected from population growth between 1840 and 1900.⁸⁴⁴ The figures for the metropolis are not arresting, bearing in mind that the early figures are of dubious accuracy, whereas the growth in the number of asylums and mean number of places in each asylum was dramatic, as Scull records. The main increase in institutionalisation rates for insanity in Middlesex beyond that predicted by population growth occurred after the Union Chargeability Act and the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund in the late 1860s produced an irresistible financial incentive. Figure 9.1 shows the rise in the percentage of pauper classified as lunatics or idiots in East London Unions between 1842 and 1875 (detailed data given in Table D2, Appendix D). Apart from the much faster growth in the

population of the metropolis, the impact of the longstanding habit of institutionalising the poor meant that by 1871, all but 4.6% of chargeable lunatics in Middlesex were either in asylums or workhouses.⁸⁴⁵ Only the tiny County of Rutland had a smaller percentage (3.9%) of the insane supported outside institutions. By contrast the Welsh counties of Anglesey, Cardigan and Camarthen maintained over 60% of their insane 'outdoors'.

The growth in numbers of lunatics has been the subject of some debate. Scull drew attention to the accumulation of chronic cases throughout the nineteenth century.⁸⁴⁶ ^e It is now accepted that the Victorian asylum's walls were more permeable than might have been expected. There was a significant turnover of acute cases, a predictably high mortality rate and in East London at any rate, a surprising merry-go-round after 1862 of omnibuses full of 'incurables' being swapped for disruptive workhouse 'recents'. Nevertheless these made only a marginal difference to the long-term resident population.⁸⁴⁷

The remorseless train of patients (and by 1860 they often were on a train) making their final 'passenger station stop' seemed never-ending. There was no concerted campaign to query the wisdom of further enlargements and additional asylums. Medical Superintendents were ambivalent; they wanted to respond to the suffering masses currently without benefit of their asylum and there must have been then as now a modest satisfaction in being indispensable. Professional standing rises when a growing trade is knocking at the door.

The official reasons for the increase in numbers of those requiring asylums was that there had been a miscalculation of the numbers in official statistics and that hidden cases

^e The actuarial science of the prediction of numbers likely to require future institutional care based on the case inception rate and duration of chronicity is now a commonplace technique used in planning services for such diverse conditions as dementia and HIV. Only as recently as the 1970s the simple truth that the longer each admission, the more beds will be needed for new admissions, was not obvious to civil servants developing policy. Hence the disastrous adoption of an institutional closure policy based on predictions in **Tooth GC and Brooke EM** 1961 Needs and Beds: Trends in Mental Hospital Populations and their Effect on Future Planning. *Lancet* I: 710-713.

were emerging from the community as detection and services increased.⁸⁴⁸ Scull however thought that a significant cause of the apparent increase was the widening of the definitions of insanity and in particular, what passed as a suitable case for institutionalisation.⁸⁴⁹ He mentions the financial incentives that encouraged, particularly after 1875, the transfer of workhouse residents to asylums but perhaps does not stress enough the earlier and later financial incentives. The antics of psychiatric diagnosis were not seriously disputed in the borderlines of sanity and madness although the correct 'placement' was. The no-man's-land was peopled with epileptics, idiots and imbeciles, people with traumatic brain damage, cases of degenerative brain disease and senile dementia, all groups who in metropolitan London at any rate, if they were not in an asylum would be in other forms of institutional care.

The major financial incentive to use asylums was the favourable cost differential between the county asylum and the private sector. There were from 1845 special financial incentives for patients whose parish settlement could not be discovered. With a fair wind and bad luck on the part of the Solicitors engaged by the County as private detectives to track down settlement entitlements, unions could pass the total cost of care onto the magistrate's county budget. Having a pauper made into a 'County Patient' was much prized; the usual candidates were incurable patients found wandering abroad in the patch and foreigners passing through the Docks who were forcibly disembarked and dumped at the local union's mercy. The clerk in Bethnal Green in the 1840s speculated and plotted how to achieve this feat with a large number of insane paupers. He did not score more than two to three 'hits' a year but was enormously pleased with himself when he did.⁸⁵⁰

The tight reciprocal bond between the parish rate payers contribution and union expenditure was weakened for lunatics before any other group of paupers by a clause in the 1853 Lunatics Amendment Act which made unions rather than parishes the accountable units of administration responsible for paying asylum fees.⁸⁵¹ It was another twelve years before the Union Chargeability Act of 1865 applied the same ruling to costs of relief for all other classes of pauper. A second clause in the 1853 Act obliged parish

medical officers to visit and report quarterly to the overseers and Guardians every pauper who in their judgment might be properly confined in an asylum. This repeated reporting of cases gave the parish doctors considerable influence over their Guardians as local 'moles' of the Lunacy Commission. The doctors had no special interest in keeping the costs of asylum placements down but a very strong interest in reducing the burden on workhouse staff and their own time.

The Union Chargeability Act of 1865 provided an even greater advantage, from the point of view of the poorer parishes, of a more equitable rating system across rich and poor unions. This enhanced the spending power of the East London unions without drawing further on their beleaguered ratepayers. Since it was the poorer parishes with the greatest burden of paupers of all kinds, including the insane, it is not surprising that unions increased their use of all institutional options that made life easier for their local workhouse staff.

Two years later the 1867 Metropolitan Poor Act severed the link between asylum funding and rate payers' pockets by the creation of the Common Poor Fund, a central pot on which unions could draw to place any number of designated cases. What a bonanza! As Cochrane remarked in his paper describing the London County Council (LCC)'s later unwise incentive system, the 1867 Act produced "immense and disproportionate growth in poor law lunatic asylums and other forms of poor relief".⁸⁵² The 1867 Act provided a major incentive for asylum growth in East London but the extra 4s per week subsidy for every lunatic placement made available after 1875 was sufficient to reduce the real cost to the Guardians of a placement to almost nothing. It is not surprising to find that almost any pauper with a hint, a suspicion of eccentricity, indecorous habits or behavioural inconvenience was a candidate for the asylum.

Funding systems designed to facilitate one social policy frequently have an unwanted effect of stimulating unforeseen changes elsewhere. The drive in the 1860s to make funding systems fairer and more equitably burdensome across rich and poor unions had

the entirely unexpected effect of inducing further institutionalisation in the poorer unions. Contemporaneously in London the weekly horrors of the Lancet Commission's Reports on appalling conditions in the workhouse infirmaries, the regular but ineffectual pressure from poor law inspectors and the marginally more persuasive Commissioners in Lunacy urged the extrusion of insane people from the workhouse. The attraction of excluding nuisances from the workhouse must have been strong. Gathorne-Hardy's objective was to provide sufficient financial incentives for the union guardians to cede power to the central poor law bureaucracy. The Common Poor Fund was the wooden horse that lured the Guardians into Troy. Lunatics became proxy parcels of cash through which centralism was achieved.

The main changes in East London from 1800-1871 were trans-institutional shifts from pauper farms to asylums in the old poor law period and from workhouses and private asylums to county and imbecile asylums in the new poor law period. There is no suggestion in the Guardians' minutes or parish and union doctors' letters that they thought the nature or rate of insanity was changing. Alienists and asylum inspectors puzzled their heads over the rising rate of lunacy through the nineteenth century but the Guardians did not.⁸⁵³ Some interesting questions remain however about nineteenth century changes in the epidemiology of syphilitic GPI,⁸⁵⁴ the role of alcohol abuse consequent on cost fluctuations in alcohol⁸⁵⁵ and the changing age demography. A little-explored area is the possible increase in dementia that would probably have accompanied the increasing life expectancy through the century and the rising proportion of indoor paupers who were elderly.^{856 857} Modest shifts in the prevalence of GPI, alcoholic cerebral disorders and dementia could have had a major impact on institutionalisation rates. There is insufficient evidence of a change in the epidemiology of insanity in East London over the period of study to draw firm conclusions. The most likely explanation for the increasing use of the public asylums was the overseers and guardians' desire to use available finance as constructively as they could to cover their total population responsibilities, given that they were irrevocably wedded to an institutional solution to dependency.

The institutional solution to insanity. Why did the eastern metropolitan vestries adopt "the segregative response to deviance" as Thomson put it, earlier than in other parts of the country?⁸⁵⁸ The use of institutions for the profoundly dependent or disruptive had been a common solution since the middle ages in Europe.⁸⁵⁹ When responsibility for the management of difficult family members remained largely informal and the personal responsibility of near kin, the placement of disruptive individuals in paid care would necessarily be confined to the monied classes. From the 16th century, when the informal, diverse old poor law customs provided a crude sort of community welfare contract long before the statutes of 1598 and 1601, English 'society' has adopted the institutional approach to dealing with those in need of 'round-the-clock' supervision when it was clearly cheaper than supporting individual placements.⁸⁶⁰ Once a community had more than a handful of dependents, communal residential solutions became attractive financially. Recently King and Lees have emphasized that the adoption of collective solutions was always more varied under the old poor law, between parishes and between geographical areas than has previously been accepted but the general premise holds good.⁸⁶¹

The old poor law poorhouse for the aged, sick and unsupported lying-in women made good financial and social sense since it minimised the burden on the rest of the community. Richard Smith argues that this collective response was essential to protect the concept of the independent, economically productive 'one or two bread-winner' nuclear family that lay at the heart of society.⁸⁶² The provision of welfare was an act of self-interest in providing security for spouses, children and elderly in the event of the loss of the main earner. The grand ostentation of the provision of almshouses, orphanages and asylums was no more than the demonstration by prominent people and corporations that they would use their wealth to support the overall design of society.

Smith introduced the concept of demography as an independent variable influencing whether or not institutions were necessary. In his demand driven welfare system, the age distribution and the birth rate were the key factors in determining the number of dependent people in a community for whom there were be insufficient carers. An aged

person with a number of economically productive children would be less likely to require an institution than one who was childless. Periods when the birth rate dropped or when more women remained childless, as for example happened after the First World War, produced excessive demand for institutions for those with no one to depend on.⁸⁶³

It is more difficult to explain the adoption of cost-inefficient collective institutional solutions for those who were not physically or mentally dependent on others for the activities of daily personal life since it was much more expensive to support able-bodied people in institutions rather than in their own homes. Outdoor relief was always cheaper per capita for the able-bodied than the union workhouse. Boyer has recently confirmed that the reduction in costs achieved by the new poor law depended entirely on a dramatic restriction in overall numbers on both indoor and outdoor poor relief and the finite number of workhouse places.⁸⁶⁴ The number of workhouse places was a crucial determinant of poor relief expenditure. Institutional size contained the poor budget within a rigid straitjacket of fixed volume. When the workhouse was full, spending stopped.

Once the new poor law had introduced severe restriction of outdoor relief, mentally ill people who might have survived outside institutions with support were swept up in the overall scheme into workhouses. In London, the restrictive workhouse system having been introduced earlier than elsewhere, large numbers of dependent people were already in institutions by the early 1830s, notably in pauper farms.

The tradition of sending mentally ill people away from their home for 'treatment' in the hope that they would be restored, was established by the sixteenth century and increasingly popular as beliefs about mental disorder were reframed from the religious/mystical to the realm of personal suffering and 'illness'. Porter cites from numerous examples of parishes as well as private families seeking expert help in the centuries before the nineteenth.⁸⁶⁵ By the seventeenth century there were numerous madhouses offering care for all classes and all purses. Parry Jones pointed out that the

cheaper institutions were huge enterprises catering for hundreds rather than tens of people and that patients of all classes were sent many miles away from home as a matter of course.⁸⁶⁶ There was nothing strange or unusual about the magistrates' notion of sending the insane to pleasant far away places for care.

Determinants of institutional size. When counties were empowered to establish lunatic asylums in 1808 and to levy a rate for the purpose, few counties wished to extend their mortgage loans at a time when they were also committed to building gaols, new roads and civic halls and enduring the uncertainties of war.⁸⁶⁷ Parishes provided for the majority of their idiots and chronic insane in their own public institutions, that is in their poorhouses. Few parishes had to cope with more than a handful of wildly deranged lunatics at any one time, but those they did have they found disruptive and difficult to manage. They were obliged to place them out in special institutions because they could not justify the capital expenditure of a separate vestry-owned special facility. Even the formation of unions after 1834 did not create sufficiently large populations of lunatics to justify the capital expense of building a separate institution. Driver points out that while the Poor Law Report of 1832 explicitly urged the creation of a diversity of small institutions for the separate classes of paupers, unions almost without exception adopted the megalith solution of one huge institution to house the lot.⁸⁶⁸

The availability of capital for borrowing to build new poor law institutions was tightly controlled by the Poor Law Commission and the loan system insufficiently cheap to encourage unions to borrow more than the absolute minimum, so the general mixed large workhouse with cheap running costs was usually chosen. Separate institutions for children were only created because of the personal influence of visionary guardians like Stephenson in Stepney who thought like Kay that education was the cure for pauperism. He had sufficient clout with his colleagues to get the union to 'invest', other unions were dragged kicking and screaming into building children's institutions separate from the workhouse.⁸⁶⁹ The Guardians did not want to borrow more capital than was absolutely necessary. If it was difficult to raise enthusiasm for buildings for pauper children, it is hardly surprising that the insane fared no better.

The county magistracy did not have the same problem in raising capital after 1845. A special lending scheme was introduced to facilitate the construction of asylums.⁸⁷⁰ London was awash with venture capital seeking an outlet in the late 1840s. Hobsbawm describes the increasing surplus of savings over that needed for industrial reinvestment that led to the second railway boom of 1845-47 and the glut available for extravagant public works.⁸⁷¹ Green elegantly illustrates the point by charting the London boom in brick manufacturing and property deals in the late 1840s that continued, with a pause in the 1850s, to the early 1860s.⁸⁷² The early county asylums had to be built without government capital financial incentives and as a consequence only 15 were built before the 1845 act. When the magistrates assumed responsibility for the institutionalised mad in 1845 and were obliged to build asylums, capital was readily available. The magistrates sought a simple global solution consistent in size with their population domain that minimised their long-term revenue requirements. Major capital investment produced the solution they required

The early asylums were not built primarily in rapidly industrializing areas where it might be conjectured that rapid social change might throw out more human incompetence to be mopped up by the welfare system if Scull's thesis is correct. They were built largely because of the determination of a handful of powerful magistrates; in Devon a small group of Tory land-owners, in Bedford the Brewer-philanthropist Whitbread, in Middlesex a trio of ambitious humanitarians of diverse political and religious persuasion. These were men who knew how to raise the necessary capital finance and knew that the greater the capital investment the cheaper the running costs, so long of course that there were sufficient patients to fill the buildings. The first asylums were built where individual reformers could get hold of sufficient capital, not because of any special characteristics of the local poor.

The planned size of the early county institutions reflected the social entrepreneurs' perception of the population at which the single institution was targeted. The Middlesex magistracy made the same global 'one capital project' decision about its convicted felons

and remand prisoners until it became convinced of the wisdom of separating the young remand prisoners from the contagion of evil recidivists. Values that shifted the capital spend from the solution which would be cheapest on revenue to a more expensive one had to be convincing and widely held, deeply embedded within the culture of the corporate public body. The magistrates were not exposed to a satisfactory alternative to the asylum and the only vision they had to provide them with their mission was that provided by the growing handful of asylum specialists and the evangelical campaigners' detest of the profit motive.⁸⁷³

Scull agrees that cash and capital are important drivers; "Financial means are the nerves of the State."⁸⁷⁴ Scull links the availability of capital in the County system to the growth of a single national market economy and to a growing allegiance to a centralised political authority. In this he is surely correct. The magistrates' access to capital depended on central government funding schemes and support from the central agencies that policed local implementation of government policy. By 1845 there were a number of central government influences such as the Lunacy Commission, the Poor Law Commission and a seemingly ceaseless stream of reports from Select Committees singing in concert with noisy parliamentarians like Ashley and his friends. The growing profession of mad-doctors provided the 'mission statement' around which the asylum policy grew. These disparate forces collectively and probably unwittingly in some quarters, shifted the locus of public provision to where the capital spend could be invested with greatest long-term economy.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the subtle complexities of relations between the family, the poor law parish, the magistracy and the central agencies gradually gave way to a dominant centre so removed from the patients that it ceased to rely on a mission of service provision other than to warehouse huge numbers of people. Although the Middlesex magistrates were capable of creating sweeping global solutions — the building of Colney Hatch is an example — nevertheless the shameless creation of vast warehouses did not really become apparent until the creation of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The remoteness of the Board from day-to-day concerns of the parishes

and unions facilitated the establishment of the apotheosis of cheap human warehouses in the barn-like 80-bed identical dormitories and 'living rooms' designed for 150 people in the vast 2000-bed imbecile asylums of 1871.

Centralism. Before Wynn's "Act for the Better Care and Management of Lunatics being Paupers or Criminals in England" central government's interest in lunacy was minimal. The Select Committee of 1807 and Wynn's Act of 1808 mark the date when the 'state', that is parliament, decided madness was its business. In his influential review of the state of nineteenth century British administrative historiography, Macleod pointed out that policy and the machinery of government implementation should be assessed against larger political manoeuvres. Individuals, elected and employed officials, were not merely passive 'carriers' of ideas but moulded policy to circumstance.⁸⁷⁵ MacDonagh, leading the post-war interest in this field, had proposed that government administrative growth and the rise of centralist power followed an inevitable and orderly progression through five stages from the identification of a social evil to the formation of an administrative office that became incorporated into government.⁸⁷⁶ Parris,⁸⁷⁷ Cromwell,⁸⁷⁸ Sutherland,⁸⁷⁹ Harris,⁸⁸⁰ and Prest⁸⁸¹ among others, who documented the differences between administrative departments, challenged MacDonagh's tidy scheme. They re-stated the importance of the rivalry between political ideologues and pragmatists, the growth and reform of the civil servant, the role of 'zealots' and experts in medicine, science and engineering and the dynamic of local politics.⁸⁸² Shaftesbury, a prime example of a 'zealot' whose personal ideology transformed central government policy, who went to his grave feeling an abject failure because he never achieved ministerial office, had been able nevertheless in his optimistic, glamorous youth and middle age to press the lunacy cause through personal influence and powerful allies. By 1869 this ageing 'Atlas' was still trying to carry the burden of lunacy reform but was ill-matched intellectually against the astute Gathorne-Hardy.

The impact of individual personalities, the power that determined leaders could exercise and the farcical shambles that could result from weak or thoughtless administration is as obvious in local government in Victorian East London as in central government. Chadwick, Kay-Shuttleworth, Mott and Hall were stern beacons of righteous zeal for

central policy but their influence over the lives of of mentally ill people in East London was modest, even using the central agency powers at their disposal. Legislation was required to make major changes, central inspectorates could only chivvy and persuade. The lives of lunatics were variously protected, exposed, made decent, made miserable, by the characters of the Guardians, the qualities of their officers and their skill in managing the total budget. Centralisation of control of government policy on poverty in the Metropolitan Poor Act had the paradoxical effect of weakening the ability of local Guardians to construct a local response to lunacy, sickness or old age. The tighter the central control the less effective the Guardians became.

Forsythe, Melling and Adair regarded the Lunacy Commission and the Poor Law Commission [later Board] as jointly representing the State machinery, most effective when they joined together to campaign for change.⁸⁸³ This was true when they made common cause as they did in Devon; very often in the eastern metropolis they did not. The ideology and machinery of lunatic administration created by the magistrates and maintained by the Lunacy Commission were curiously at odds from the start with mainstream thinking on the poor and the sick poor created by the whole edifice of the New Poor Law and the Poor Law Commission. It is hardly surprising that, the aims of the two systems being so at odds, the mainstream government department would eventually triumph over, or at least temper the aspirations and ambitions of the magistrates' lunacy sideshow and Shaftesbury's small club. The Guardians' officers were merely the foot soldiers recruited to fight the central empire's battles. They did not see until it was too late that they themselves had been neatly side-lined and lost their influence over the lives of the rate-payers they were meant to serve.

Bureaucracies are often admired for their boldness, for the big idea, for the development of a professional cadre of administrators and their ability to effect Bentham's utilitarian ideal of the greatest happiness for the greatest number.⁸⁸⁴ Surely just as important are sensitivity and responsiveness to individual human need, the ability to adjust to local problems with local solutions and to promote the essential humanity of both the administrator and those ministered to. On those criteria, the best of the old poor law parishes and early Boards of Guardians in East London both win hands down over the

Justices' asylum system and the Metropolitan Asylums Board. Listening directly to families, hearing their ideas for ameliorating their problems and working daily alongside the staff who struggled with inadequate budgets to 'manage' the marginalised and excluded, the heroes of this story are those who toiled within the straitjacket of their culture and under the weight of central directives to produce acceptable responses to the small personal tragedies of 'minds diseases'.

**THE ADMINISTRATION OF INSANITY IN EAST LONDON
1800-1870**

Volume II Appendices

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- ³¹⁴ Brassett DA 1964 op cit p6
- ³¹⁵ St Leonard Shoreditch Orders of Removal from Parish to Lunatic Asylums P91/LEN/1308, 1823-1831
- ³¹⁶ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor Minutes see 26 September 1806, 31 December 1807, 27 December 1811, P91/LEN/11; 24 October 1822, 14 July 1825 P91/LEN/16
- ³¹⁷ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor Minutes 9 February 1831 P91/LEN/16
- ³¹⁸ St Leonard Shoreditch Workhouse admissions/discharges book, 1823-1831 P91/LEN/1336 and 1832-1836, P91/LEN/1337
- ³¹⁹ St Luke's Admission Registers 1800-1840, information provided by archivist.
- ³²⁰ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor Minutes P91/LEN/11, 9 February 1832
- ³²¹ Hanwell Admission Registers Female H11/HLL/B1/1 and Males H11/HLL/B3/1
- ³²² St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor P91/LEN/11 Minutes 24 June 1815, Letter from Sharpe to Trustees 15 June 1815 copied into Minutes.
- ³²³ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor P91/LEN/11 Minutes 1 July 1815
- ³²⁴ John Birch Sharpe's Evidence to SC on Madhouses 1815 op cit 30 May 1815, 205
- ³²⁵ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor P91/LEN/11 Minutes 12 October 1815 and 9 November 1815
- ³²⁶ Edward Wakefield's Evidence to SC on Madhouses 1815 op cit 2 May 1815, pp44, 163, 290
- ³²⁷ Annual returns of poor relief expenditure to Poor Law Board and Local Government Board quoted in Williams K 1981 op cit table 4.6 p169-172
- ³²⁸ St Leonard Shoreditch Trustees of the Poor P91/LEN/11 Minutes 8 June 1815
- ³²⁹ All Saints Poplar Overseers Bills TH/8630/64 and Accounts P88/ALL/1/200-300
- ³³⁰ All Saints Poplar Overseers Accounts P88/ALL /1/190
- ³³¹ Hanwell Admission Registers Female H11/HLL/B1/1 and Males H11/HLL/B3/1 and Accounts 1832-35 H11/HLL/D1
- ³³² Baugh DA 1975 The Cost of Poor Relief in South East England 1790-1834 Economic History Review 28: 50-68
- ³³³ Checkland and Checkland 1974 op cit 124,175
- ³³⁴ Ibid 142
- ³³⁵ Ibid 142
- ³³⁶ Ibid pp 233-234
- ³³⁷ Ibid pp 237-238
- ³³⁸ Ibid pp119
- ³³⁹ Lees LH 1998 op cit 115
- ³⁴⁰ Thomas Fowell Buxton a member of the Spitalfields Association wrote "The City had the man so long as he could work; the country had him when he could not. Spitalfields was the drain for the distressed of the Capital—a kind of metropolitan workhouse to which all that is wretched resorts" p7 in Buxton T F 1816 The Distress of Spitalfields. London, quoted Chapter 2 The Growth of Natural Law Opposition, Cowherd 1977 op cit 37
- ³⁴¹ Huzel JP 1969 Malthus, the Poor Law and Population in Early Nineteenth Century England. Economic History Review 22:446
- ³⁴² Cowherd R 1977 op cit 43
- ³⁴³ Brundage A 1978 The Making of the New Poor Law. London, Hutchinson. 14
- ³⁴⁴ Mandler P 1990 Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals 1830-1832. Oxford, Clarendon 10-15
- ³⁴⁵ Digby A 1976 The Rural Poor Law, in D Fraser (ed) The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century. London, Macmillan 153
- ³⁴⁶ Chester N 1981 The English Administrative System 1780-1870 Oxford, Clarendon Press. Chapter VI Offices, Departments and Boards: Poor Law 259-264
- ³⁴⁷ Digby A 1978 Pauper Palaces London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Chapter 4 The Impact of National Reform after 1834, 54-82

- ³⁴⁸ **Brundage A** 1978 op cit 155; **Lowerson J** 1983 Anti-Poor Law Movements and Rural Trade Unionism in the South-East. In **A Charlesworth** *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain 1548-1900*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 156-157
- ³⁴⁹ **Sir Francis Head**, Assistant Commissioner for East Kent, Quoted in **Longmate N** 1974 *The Workhouse*. London, Temple Smith 34-35
- ³⁵⁰ **Ibid** 34-36
- ³⁵¹ **Driver F** 1993 *Power and Pauperism. The Workhouse System 1834-1884*, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6 Classifying the Poor: images of pauper-land, 106-111
- ³⁵² **Brundage A** 1978 op cit 154; **Rudé G** 1964 *The Crowd in History, a Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848* Chichester, Wiley (Serif ed'n published 1995 from revised ed'n 1981) Chapter 12 Chartism 179-194
- ³⁵³ **Brundage A** 1978 op cit, 14-15 and Chapter V Implementation at Local Level: a Regional Example. 105-144
- ³⁵⁴ **Webb, S & B** 1927 *English Poor Law History*. London, Longmans Green, Part I The Old Poor Law, 254
- ³⁵⁵ **Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1834** op cit Appendix A Codd's Report, 79
- ³⁵⁶ **Parish of St Sepulchre. Minutes of the Vestry Meeting** 15 July 1834.
- ³⁵⁷ **Parish of St Botolph Aldgate Minutes of the Guardians Meetings** 3 September 1834
- ³⁵⁸ **Parish of St Botolph Aldgate Minutes of the Guardians Meetings** 10 September 1834
- ³⁵⁹ **Ryan PA** 1985 *Politics and Relief: East London Unions in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* in **M Rose** (ed) *The Poor and the City: the English Poor Law in its Urban Context 1834-1914*. Leicester University Press 133-172; **Ryan PA** 1978 *Poplarism 1894-1930, Origins in Thane P* (ed) *The Origins of British Social Policy*. London
- ³⁶⁰ **Minutes of the Trustees, St Leonard Shoreditch** P91/LEN 17 Sept-December 1834
- ³⁶¹ **Letter from Trustees of St Leonard Shoreditch to Poor Law Commission** P91/LEN 17 April 1835
- ³⁶² **Minutes of the Trustees of the Poor St John Hackney** P79/ JN1/ 147, 14 May 1834
- ³⁶³ **Minutes of the Trustees of the Poor St John Hackney** P79/ JN1/ 147, 27 May 1834
- ³⁶⁴ **Poor Law Amendment Act 1834** 4&5 Will.IV c76 section 45
- ³⁶⁵ **8th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1842**. Appendix A No. 3 Orders, letters. Article General Order Workhouse Rules 49
- ³⁶⁶ **9th Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1843** para 70, 19
- ³⁶⁷ **Ibid** paras 70-71, 19
- ³⁶⁸ **Poor Law Commission** A Return of the Number of Pauper Lunatics and Idiots Chargeable to each of the Unions in England and Wales and also those places under local Acts in August 1842. (Referred to as **Annual Returns of Pauper Lunatics 1842**), 1842 and 1843 Returns in University of London Library Lunacy Vol 3 371-415
- ³⁶⁹ **Baker** was also Acting Coroner for the Eastern Metropolis. For a biographical note see Appendix C.
- ³⁷⁰ **Letter to Poor Law Commission from Chairman**, recorded in **Minutes of Meetings of Stepney Union Board of Guardians** St BG/L/1 21 December 1836
- ³⁷¹ **Stepney Union Letters-out Books, Series St BG/L/97**
- ³⁷² **Minutes of Meetings of Stepney Union Board of Guardians, (Stepney Minutes)** St BG/L 5, 4 August, 11 August 1842
- ³⁷³ **Annual Returns of Pauper Lunatics 1842** op cit Middlesex Returns 405 (Blue Book Original p 35)
- ³⁷⁴ **Stepney Minutes** St BG/L/1 21 December 1836
- ³⁷⁵ **St BG/L/1** 21 December 1836
- ³⁷⁶ **St BG /L/1** February 1837, 48
- ³⁷⁷ **St BG /L/1** February 1837, 48
- ³⁷⁸ **18th Special Report of the Visiting Committee of Stepney Union** 15 October 1838, minuted St BG/L/2, 18 October 1838
- ³⁷⁹ **Dr JP Kay** became first Secretary and chief educational advisor to the new Education Department formed in 1839. For his role in education see **JRB Johnson** 1972 *Administrators in Education Before 1870: patronage, social position and role*. Chapter 5 in **G Sutherland** (ed) 1972 *Studies in the Growth of Nineteenth Century Government*. London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 110-138 and **Selleck RJW** 1993 *James Kay-Shuttleworth: Journey of an Outsider*. London, Portland. Chapter 6 *The Committee of the Privy Council on Education 1843-49, 142-196*; **Smith F** 1923 *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-*

Shuttleworth. London (SH library ref: SH.J4CT.KAY.Smi.) is an older but comprehensive biography of Kay.

- ³⁸⁰ **33rd Report of the Visiting Committee of Stepney Union** minuted St BG/L/3, 18 November 1839
- ³⁸¹ **Stepney Minutes, St BG/L/1** 8 August 1837
- ³⁸² **St BG/L/3** 19 December 1839
- ³⁸³ **St BG/L/3** 7 November 1839
- ³⁸⁴ **St BG/L/2** 6 March 1838
- ³⁸⁵ **St BG/L/2** 11 October 1838
- ³⁸⁶ **St BG/L/3** 25 January 1839
- ³⁸⁷ **Letter from Poor Law Commission to Clerk to Stepney Union** St BG/L/3, 6 February 1839
- ³⁸⁸ **Letter from Poor Law Commission to Clerk to Stepney Union** St BG/L/3, 25 February 1839
- ³⁸⁹ **St BG/L/4** 17 August 1840, 1 October 1840,
- ³⁹⁰ **St BG/L/4** 17 August 1840, also 210, 262
- ³⁹¹ **St BG/L/3** 7 November 1839, 297
- ³⁹² **Poor Law Commission General Medical Order to Parishes and Unions** 1843 Letters-out Book, St BG/L/97/6 20 February 1844 no's 49, 87, 104, 204, 250, 261, 266
- ³⁹³ **Stepney Minutes** St BG/L/7 23 February 1843
- ³⁹⁴ **Crowther MA** 1984 Paupers or Patients? Obstacles to Professionalisation in the Poor Law Medical Services before 1914. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 39: 33-54
- ³⁹⁵ **Letter from Stepney Union to Poor Law Commission** Letters-out Book St BG/L/97/6, 23 March 1844
- ³⁹⁶ **Stepney Minutes** St BG/L/7 February 1843, 54
- ³⁹⁷ **St BG/L/8** 22 August 1844
- ³⁹⁸ **St BG/L/8** 22 August 1844
- ³⁹⁹ **St BG/L/7** 2 February 1843, 17
- ⁴⁰⁰ **St BG/L/7** 2 February 1843
- ⁴⁰¹ **Stepney Union Returns of Medical Officers.** 1845 Letters-out Book St BG/L/97/6 Letter 611
- ⁴⁰² **Lunatics Acts 8 & 9 Victoria c.126 Section 55.** Poor Law Commission circular noted minutes St BG/L/10, 28 August 1845, 392
- ⁴⁰³ **Stepney Minutes** St BG/L/10 28 August 1845, 393
- ⁴⁰⁴ **St BG/L/10** 4 September 1845
- ⁴⁰⁵ **St BG/L/10** 11 September 1845
- ⁴⁰⁶ **Letters-out Book** St BG/L/97/2 27 November 1838 no 558
- ⁴⁰⁷ **St BG/L/97/2** Letters out book 18 December 1838 no 5
- ⁴⁰⁸ **Stepney Minutes** St BG/L 4 18 March 1840, letter dated 21 February 1840
- ⁴⁰⁹ **St BG/L 4** 31 March 1840
- ⁴¹⁰ **St BG/L 4** 14 May 1840
- ⁴¹¹ **St BG/L 4** 14 May 1840
- ⁴¹² **St BG/L 6** 10 September 1842
- ⁴¹³ **St BG/L 5** 13 January 1841, 408
- ⁴¹⁴ **Richardson R** 1988 Death, Dissection and the Destitute Harmondsworth Penguin 79-85
- ⁴¹⁵ **Letters-out Book** St BG/L/97/2 18 August 1838 no 423
- ⁴¹⁶ **Letters-out Book** St BG/L/97/1 6 October 1837 no 488
- ⁴¹⁷ **Letter Baker to Chadwick, Poor Law Commission** St BG/L/97/6 Letters-out Book no 587
- ⁴¹⁸ **Letters-out Book** St BG/L/97/6 11 January 1845 no 609
- ⁴¹⁹ **Ryan P** 1985 Politics and Relief. East London Unions in the Late 19th and early 20th Century, 137 in M E Rose (ed) *The Poor and the City: Poor Law and its Urban Context 1834-1914*. Leicester University Press
- ⁴²⁰ **Poor Law Commission** schedule B. Guidance on recording lunatic expenditure on form 7, 53, 59
- ⁴²¹ **Letter to Whitechapel Union from Poor Law Commission** June 1837, In-letter book. St BG/Wh/107/2, 218; see also **Letter Chadwick to Whitechapel Guardians** St BG/Wh/107/2, 226 and 250
- ⁴²² **Minutes of Meetings of Whitechapel Board of Guardians (Whitechapel Minutes)** St/BG/Wh/1, 21 March 1837
- ⁴²³ **Whitechapel Minutes** St/BG/Wh/1, 15 August 1837
- ⁴²⁴ **Ibid** 22, 29 August 1837

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- ⁴²⁵ **Ibid** 12 December 1837, quarterly accounts 364
- ⁴²⁶ **Ibid** 5 September 1837
- ⁴²⁷ **St/BG/Wh/2** 22 May 1838
- ⁴²⁸ **St/BG/Wh/3** 143, 144, 148
- ⁴²⁹ **St/BG/Wh/1** December 1837, 370
- ⁴³⁰ **Ibid** 371
- ⁴³¹ **Ibid** Michaelmas Quarterly Accounts 1837 reported to Board 22 December 1837
- ⁴³² **St BG /Wh/2** January 1838
- ⁴³³ **St/BG/Wh/3** 1839, 29
- ⁴³⁴ **St/BG/Wh/3** February 1839
- ⁴³⁵ **St/BG/Wh/5** Discussions June to September 1841
- ⁴³⁶ **4th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission** 1838 Appendix A Supplement 2 Report on the Causes of Sickness and Mortality amongst the Poor 83-88; Correspondence from Poor Law Commission to Whitechapel Guardians recorded Whitechapel Minutes **St/BG/Wh/2** January to May 1838
- ⁴³⁷ **Whitechapel Minutes** **St/BG/Wh/2** March 1838
- ⁴³⁸ Examples **Whitechapel Minutes** **St/BG/Wh/3** pp295, 302, 335, 361, 372
- ⁴³⁹ **St/BG/Wh/3** See example p387 Complaint of Nathaniel Clark
- ⁴⁴⁰ Story taken from complaint from Stepney Union to Poor Law Commission described in **Letter from Chadwick, Poor Law Commission to Whitechapel Guardians**, Whitechapel Minutes **St/BG/Wh 3**, 6 December 1839, 361-363
- ⁴⁴¹ Complaint recorded in the minutes **St/BG/Wh/4**, 27 April 1840
- ⁴⁴² **Letter Poor Law Commission to Whitechapel Guardians Letters-in Book** **St BG/Wh/107/2**, 157, 9 May 1840
- ⁴⁴³ **Whitechapel Minutes** **St/BG/Wh/4**, 30 June 1840; 25 August 1840; 1 September 1840
- ⁴⁴⁴ **St/BG/Wh/3** April 1839, 161, 169
- ⁴⁴⁵ See also **St BG/Wh/1** 150; **St BG/Wh/2** 45, 52; **St/BG/Wh/3** 161
- ⁴⁴⁶ **St/BG/Wh/3** inquiry interview 178
- ⁴⁴⁷ **Letter from Kay to Whitechapel Union, Whitechapel Minutes** **St/BG/Wh/3** 7 May 1839
- ⁴⁴⁸ **St/BG/Wh/3** **Letter Byles to the Guardians**. 14 May 1839, 177
- ⁴⁴⁹ **St/BG/Wh/3** Meeting 14 May 1839
- ⁴⁵⁰ **St/BG/Wh/4** 5 March 1840, 51
- ⁴⁵¹ Complaint and Board discussion recorded **St/BG/Wh/8** 20 February 1844, 4 March 1844
- ⁴⁵² **St/BG/Wh/8** 19 March 1844
- ⁴⁵³ **Lunatic detention orders Whitechapel**. **St/BG/Wh/118/1**
- ⁴⁵⁴ **General Medical Order** issued by the Poor Law Commission 1842, quoted by Forster in letter to the Board **St/BG/Wh/6**, 1842, 120
- ⁴⁵⁵ **Whitechapel Minutes** **St/BG/Wh/3** April 1839, 143
- ⁴⁵⁶ **St/BG/Wh/3** April 1839, 164
- ⁴⁵⁷ **St/BG/Wh/3**, 19 November 1839, 347
- ⁴⁵⁸ **St/BG/Wh/3** 22 December 1839
- ⁴⁵⁹ **St/BG/Wh/3** 5 November 1839
- ⁴⁶⁰ **St/BG/Wh/6** 1842, 132ff
- ⁴⁶¹ **St/BG/Wh/5** 6 April 1841
- ⁴⁶² **St/BG/Wh/8** 8 October 1844
- ⁴⁶³ **St/BG/Wh/8** 24 November 1844, 344
- ⁴⁶⁴ **St/BG/Wh/8** 4 January 1845, 10, 12
- ⁴⁶⁵ **St/BG/Wh/8** 3 March 1846, 429, 430, 436
- ⁴⁶⁶ **St/BG/Wh/8** 11 March 1846
- ⁴⁶⁷ **Watson I** 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington. London Historical Publications. Watson quotes a 1922 Stoke Newington Poor Law guardian "It would be cheaper to send our paupers to the Hotel Cecil than to subscribe to Hackney Union." Vestry affairs, 80
- ⁴⁶⁸ **Minutes of Meetings of Hackney and Stoke Newington Board of Guardians (Hackney Minutes)** Index Book Ha BG 2, May 1838-July 1839
- ⁴⁶⁹ **Crowther MA** 1981 *The Workhouse System 1834-1929*. London Batsford, 27, 28, 198
- ⁴⁷⁰ **Hackney Minutes** **HA BG 2** July 1838
- ⁴⁷¹ **HA BG 2** 5 July 1838

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- ⁴⁷² **HA BG 2** 8 August 1838
- ⁴⁷³ **HA BG 2** 5 July 1838
- ⁴⁷⁴ **HA BG 2** 30 May 1838
- ⁴⁷⁵ **HA BG 3** 29 July 1839
- ⁴⁷⁶ **HA BG2** 30 May 1838
- ⁴⁷⁷ **Minutes of Meetings of Bethnal Green Board of Guardians, (Bethnal Green Minutes) Be BG 1** 10 April 1837
- ⁴⁷⁸ **Bethnal Green Minutes Be BG 1** 10 April 1837
- ⁴⁷⁹ **Ibid** 26 June 1837
- ⁴⁸⁰ **Ibid** 10 April 1837
- ⁴⁸¹ **Ibid** 17 April 1837
- ⁴⁸² **Ibid** 17 April 1837
- ⁴⁸³ **Bethnal Green Minutes Be BG 8**, 5 December 1842, 69-73; 19 December 1842 81-85
- ⁴⁸⁴ **Ibid** 17 October 1842
- ⁴⁸⁵ **Be BG 9** 4 September 1843, 339
- ⁴⁸⁶ **Ibid Letter from Bethnal Green Clerk to the Guardians to Poor Law Commission 1843**, 357
- ⁴⁸⁷ There are numerous volumes of "Correspondence Poor Law Commission/ Board to Boards of Guardians" known colloquially as "Letters-in Books", see for example series Stepney St BG/L/97, Whitechapel St BG/Wh/107, Bethnal Green Be BG 265
- ⁴⁸⁸ **Letter Edwin Chadwick to Whitechapel Guardians, St BG/Wh 3** 361-363
- ⁴⁸⁹ **Be BG 5**, 16 September 1839, 47; 21 September 1839, 56-58,
- ⁴⁹⁰ **Be BG 5** 8 February 1840, 229
- ⁴⁹¹ Final note in minutes **Be BG 5** 14 August 1839, 21
- ⁴⁹² **Be BG 5** 30 November 1839
- ⁴⁹³ **Be BG 5** 16 September 1839, 47; also pp 70,188,189
- ⁴⁹⁴ **Be BG 5**, 319,331
- ⁴⁹⁵ **Bethnal Green Minutes Be BG 4** 11 October 1838
- ⁴⁹⁶ **Be BG 4** 11 October 1838
- ⁴⁹⁷ **Be BG 4** 5 November 1838
- ⁴⁹⁸ **Letter from Bethnal Green Board of Guardians to Lord John Russell Be BG 4**, 5 November 1838
- ⁴⁹⁹ **Be BG 5**, 151
- ⁵⁰⁰ **Be BG 5** 1 July 1839, 309
- ⁵⁰¹ **Be BG 5** 30 September 1839; 14 October 1839
- ⁵⁰² **Be BG 5** 27 November 1839
- ⁵⁰³ **Be BG 5** 27 March, 3 June, 17 June 1839
- ⁵⁰⁴ **Be BG 6** 1 July, 8 July, 13 July, 3 August, 10 August, 17 August, 24 August 1840
- ⁵⁰⁵ **Be BG 6** 24 August 1840
- ⁵⁰⁶ **Be BG 4** 5 November 1838
- ⁵⁰⁷ **Minutes of Meetings of St George in the East Board of Guardians (St George Minutes) series St BG/SG/1-78**
- ⁵⁰⁸ **St George in the East Letters-in Books series St BG/SG/91/1-**
- ⁵⁰⁹ **Annual Returns of Pauper Lunatics 1842** op cit Middlesex Returns 405
- ⁵¹⁰ **St George Minutes St BG/SG/02** 16 February, 8 March 1844
- ⁵¹¹ **St BG/SG/02** 15 March 1844
- ⁵¹² **St BG/SG/01** 9 September 1836
- ⁵¹³ **St BG/SG/02** 8 November 1839
- ⁵¹⁴ **St BG/SG/02** 24 March 1842, 169,171; March 1843, 280
- ⁵¹⁵ **St BG/SG/02** December 1842, December 1843
- ⁵¹⁶ **St BG/SG/02** November 1843
- ⁵¹⁷ **St BG/SG/02** Midsummer accounts minuted 1 July 1842, 206-207; Table of Average Annual Expenditure, **Annual Returns to Poor Law Commissioners 1842** University of London Library Poor Law Vol 35, Middlesex Returns on Poor Relief Expenditure 353
- ⁵¹⁸ **Hackney and Stoke Newington Union Board of Guardians' Accounts** recorded in Hackney Minutes Ha BG 5, 28 September 1842, 5 October 1842
- ⁵¹⁹ **St George in the East Pauper Examination Books series St BG/SG/94/1-, St BG/SG/97/1-, 1837-42**

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- ⁵²⁰ **St George in the East Casuals Examination Books St BG/SG/97/4.** 43 casual paupers requested workhouse admission in January 1837, 12 were ill and four of the 12 died shortly after admission. Seven of the 43 were Irish, one refused to sign the rules of the House and was quickly “passed to Ireland”. Four other Irish casuals died within a very short time.
- ⁵²¹ **St George Minutes St BG/SG/02** 20 November 1846
- ⁵²² **St BG/SG/03** 27 March 1846, 142
- ⁵²³ **St BG/SG/03** 17 August 1849, 446
- ⁵²⁴ **St BG/SG/03** 28 November 1845, 119
- ⁵²⁵ **St BG/SG/03** 3 October 1845, 109; **Hackney Minutes Ha BG7**, 1 October 1845, 276
- ⁵²⁶ **Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor** 1844 op cit Numbers of suicides at Hanwell 1839-43 recorded in Table 6 Causes of Death During the Same Four Years, 28
- ⁵²⁷ **Letter from Thomas Stone to JP Kay** 27 February 1839 in 7th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1840 Appendix B No.7 The Conduct of Dissolute Women in Workhouses, 179
- ⁵²⁸ **Annual Returns to the Poor Law Commissioners** 1843 Workhouse Offences 1835-42 University of London Library Poor Law Vol 35, 307, 325
- ⁵²⁹ **Letter from Thomas Stone to JP Kay** 27 February 1839 op cit 179
- ⁵³⁰ **Letter from JP Kay to Poor Law Commissioners** 28 February 1839 quoted in 7th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners 1840 Appendix B No.7 The Conduct of Dissolute Women in Workhouses, 180
- ⁵³¹ **Letter from JP Kay to Poor Law Commission** 16 April 1839 in 7th Annual Report PLC op cit 180
- ⁵³² **St George Minutes St BG/SG/03**, 23 February 1849 - May 1839, 400,402,404,408,420,432
- ⁵³³ **Annual Returns to the Poor Law Commissioners** 1843. Return of the Annual Average Expenditure for the Parishes Comprised in Each Union in England and Wales for the Relief and Maintenance of the Poor for 1841, 1842 and 1843, op cit Poor Law Vol 35, 347-373, Middlesex returns 353
- ⁵³⁴ **Annual Returns to the Poor Law Commissioners** 1842 Return of the Annual Average Expenditure for the Parishes Comprised in Each Union in England and Wales for the relief and Maintenance of the Poor in the three years prior to the declaration of the Union, op cit Poor Law Vol 35: 144 (Parliamentary Blue Book Original p6)
- ⁵³⁵ **8th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1842 Table of Costs of Officers employed by Unions and Parishes. University of London Library Poor Law Vol 34: 322
- ⁵³⁶ **McGill GH** 1858 The East End Incumbent on London Poor Rates Abridged Version, published as an appendix to J Hollingshead, Ragged London 1861 London Smith and Elder 294-315
- ⁵³⁷ **Ibid** 313
- ⁵³⁸ **9th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1843 University of London Library Poor Law Vol 34, Appendix E Number 8 Orders Issued, 379
- ⁵³⁹ **10th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1844 Poor Law Vol 34, para 17, table p7
- ⁵⁴⁰ **Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws** 1834 Mott’s Supplement Answers to Town Queries III Poor Law Vol 21, 167
- ⁵⁴¹ **Minutes of Meetings of the Poplar Union Board of Guardians (Poplar Minutes)** PO/BG/001 26 January 1837
- ⁵⁴² **Workhouse plans** were mentioned at almost every meeting in 1837-1842 Poplar Minutes PO/BG/002-003
- ⁵⁴³ **Workhouse Plans commissioned Poplar Union** John Morris 1842 PO/BG/281
- ⁵⁴⁴ **Poplar Minutes PO/BG/001** 25 May 1837, 100
- ⁵⁴⁵ **PO/BG/001** 31 May 1837, **PO/BG/001** 1 November 1837
- ⁵⁴⁶ **PO/BG/001** 23 November, 30 November 1837
- ⁵⁴⁷ **PO/BG/001** 23 December 1837
- ⁵⁴⁸ **Stedman Jones G** 1971 (revised 1984) Outcast London Harmondsworth, Penguin 202, 210, 266
- ⁵⁴⁹ **Poplar Minutes PO/BG/ 001** 2 January 1838
- ⁵⁵⁰ **PO/BG/001** 28 June, 5 July 1837
- ⁵⁵¹ **PO/BG/001** 30 November 1837
- ⁵⁵² **St George Minutes St BG/GE/001**, 108
- ⁵⁵³ **Annual Returns to the Poor Law Commissioners** 1843. Return of the Annual Average Expenditure for the Parishes Comprised in Each Union in England and Wales for the Relief and Maintenance of the Poor for 1841, 1842 and 1843, op cit Poor Law Vol 35, 347-373, Middlesex returns 353
- ⁵⁵⁴ **Mitford J** Hoxton Sausage and Jerry Wags Journal 1826 no 2: 10 Tyssen Collection HAD Ms D/F/Tys

⁵⁵⁵ **Comments by Mr Hooker, Bethnal Green official to Chadwick** quoted in Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1834 op cit Appendix A Part III: 109

⁵⁵⁶ **Draft Vestry Minutes St Leonard's Shoreditch** 1833-37 P91/LEN/3

⁵⁵⁷ **Minutes of the Trustees of the Poor, Parish of St Leonard's Shoreditch (Shoreditch Minutes)** 1826-48 P91/LEN/14-23

⁵⁵⁸ **Shoreditch Minutes P91/LEN/18** 26 January 1836. Chapple and Co. met Poor Law Commission 26 January 1836

⁵⁵⁹ **P91/LEN/18**, 93,120,129,139,144,148,245 and others indexed

⁵⁶⁰ **Minutes of Open Vestry Meeting** 16 March 1837 included in Shoreditch Minutes of the Trustees of the Poor P91/LEN/18

⁵⁶¹ **Introduction to LMA Index of Archive Parish of St Leonard Shoreditch and Board of Guardians** Reference File P91/LEN, p1

⁵⁶² **Shoreditch Minutes P91/LEN/18**, 31 December 1835

⁵⁶³ **The Times** 1843 5 October 6d Disgraceful Proceedings at St Leonard's Shoreditch

⁵⁶⁴ **McCalman I** 1988 Radical Underworld. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 106-12, 196-9, 233-5

⁵⁶⁵ **Ibid** 232

⁵⁶⁶ **4th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1838, 4

⁵⁶⁷ **7th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1841, 22

⁵⁶⁸ **9th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners** 1843 Report on Local Acts Appendix A, 69

⁵⁶⁹ **Ibid** 69

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⁵⁷⁴ see chapter 7, and **Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** 1844 op cit Chapter V Restraint 150-152, 158

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- ⁶⁴³ A lithograph of the discarded plans for a new asylum at **Hanwell** shows the proposed new building on the west of the old asylum (**East London and the City HA**).
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- ⁶⁴⁷ **Letter from Jeaffreson to Bathurst** 17 July 1851; Stepney Union Minutes St BG/L/16, p361 Meeting 17 July 1851
- ⁶⁴⁸ **Letter from Lutwidge, Secretary to the Commissioners in Lunacy to Bathurst** 22 July 1851 quoted Stepney Union Minutes St BG/L/16, 363
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APPENDIX B: East London Licensed Houses

Supplementary Information on Licensed Houses taking Paupers

Bethnal Green Asylums: the early years 1727-1800

When Matthew Wright took a fifty-year lease on Bethnal House, Bethnal Green in 1727 to use as a madhouse,¹ he launched a business which occupied premises on this site continuously for nearly two centuries, until 1920. A local Tower Hamlets archivist, Arthur J Robinson did most of the original research on the buildings in the late 1970's and early 80's and this account owes much to his work and the original documents in Tower Hamlets Archive.^{2 3} The last surviving asylum building, built in 1896, is now Bethnal Green Public Library.

Bethnal House or Kirby's Castle, sometimes called the Blind Beggar's House⁴ and later, more notoriously, the White House,⁵ stood facing west onto the Green (Poors Land) on what is now the LCC Bethnal Green Estate built in 1924. Strype's 1720 edition of Stow's Survey of London (1603) describes it as "a fair house built in Queen Elizabeth's reign by one John Kirby...which house, lofty like a castle, occasioned certain rhymes abusive of him and some other City builders of great houses and had prejudiced themselves thereby".

Kirkebye's Castell and Fisher's Follie
Spinalas pleasure and Megses glorie

¹ **Middlesex Land Registry** 1727 vol 4 no.12 LMA

² **Robinson A J and Chesshyre DHB** 1986 *The Green*. London, London Borough of Tower Hamlets 10-16

³ Tower Hamlets Archive is in Bancroft Rd Library, a magnificent Victorian plastered hall sandwiched between the back of the People's Palace and Mile End Workhouse (now Hospital).

⁴ The legend of the Blind Beggar, commemorated in the name of the pub on the Mile End Road where the Krays did for Jack the Hat, was told in a popular ballad in the 16th/17th centuries. Retold in **Robinson and Chessyre** 1986 op cit 31-39.

⁵ Presumably because the White House was a white limewashed, timber-framed building with weather boarding; see illustration.

Sir Hugh Platt, 1552-1608, prolific writer on scientific and horticultural topics, lived in the house after Kirby's widow died.⁶ The next owner of note was William Ryder, Deputy Master of Trinity House, who bought the house in 1660. Samuel Pepys deposited his diary with Ryder for safe keeping at Bethnal Green during the Great Fire of 1666.⁷ Thomas Ryder, William's son owned the house next and was probably the last person to live in it as a personal home.⁹

Matthew Wright paid £41 per annum for the lease in 1727. Wright's Asylum is best known through Alexander Cruden's pamphlet "The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured" (1739).¹⁰ Cruden's adventures in and out of sanity are given life in Porter's "Social History of Madness."¹¹ Cruden's mammoth "Concordance to the Bible" is a stupendous piece of obsessive cross-referencing and scholarship, which remains a

⁶ Platt wrote *The Jewel House of Art and Nature* which contains practical hints and recipes, including "Preserving fruit, A perspective ring for cheating at cards, invisible ink (milk or gall), beer without hops, how to carry gold safely" (1594)

⁷ *Ibid* p10

⁸ Pepys wrote, 2nd September 1666, the second night of the fire: "About 4 a-clock in the morning, my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money and plate and best things to Sir W. Rider's at Bednall greene, which I did, riding myself in my night gown in the cart, and Lord to see how the streets and the highways were crowded with people running and riding and getting of carts at any rate to fetch away things. I find Sir W Rider tired with being up all night and receiving things from several friends.... I am eased at my heart to have my treasures so well secured. Then home with much ado to find a way. Not any sleep all this night nor my poor wife." A week later Pepys walked back for dinner with Ryder but seems in no hurry to remove his belongings. "Good people they are and good discourse"; unfortunately, "the venison pie was bad". He returned for dinner there the following day by which time Ryder was getting anxious about the valuables under his roof: "The town is full of report of the wealth in this house". So finally Pepys hires a cart and removes his belongings but cannot return home immediately and his wife has gone to stay in Deptford, so he spends several days carting his finest treasures round his office and other friends' houses in an embarrassed fashion because he is not that keen on everyone knowing the quality of his possessions, some because they were not very good and others because they were.

⁹ **Bethnal Green Poors Land Trust Deed** 1678 (in THA) lists Thomas Ryder as one of the parties to the Poors Land Trust

¹⁰ **Cruden A** 1739 *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured: or A British Inquisition Display'd, in an Account of an Unparallel'd Case of a Citizen of London, Bookseller to the Late Queen, Who Was in a Most Unjust and Arbitrary Manner Sent on the 23rd March Last 1738 by one Robert Wightman, a Mere Stranger, to a Private Madhouse.* London T Cooper ; **Cruden A** 1740 *Mr Cruden Greatly Injured: An Account of a Trial Between Mr Alexander Cruden Bookseller to the Late Queen, Plaintiff, and Dr Monro, Matthew Wright, John Oswald and John Davies, Defendants: in the Court of Common-Pleas in Westminster Hall July 17 1739 on an Action of Trespass, Assault and Imprisonment: the said Mr Cruden, Tho' in his Right Senses, Having Been Unjustly Confined and Barbarously Used in the Said Matthew Wright's Private Madhouse at Bethnal-Green for Nine Weeks and Six Days, till He Made His Wonderful Escape May 31 1738. To Which is Added A Surprising Account Of Several Other Persons, Who Have Been Most Unjustly Confined in Private Madhouses. A Injured.*

¹¹ **Porter R** 1987 *A Social History of Madness* London Weidenfield and Nicholson Chapter 7 From Fools to Outsiders 126-135

standard reference work. A crescendo of increasingly bizarre scenes involving a widow he had his sights on resulted in his being lured into a coach by a friend of the widow's, Wightman and delivered to the Asylum. He was detained there for nine weeks and six days by the certification of James Monro and others.

Cruden was kept in the 'Red House' just to the south of the White House, so evidently there were two mad houses comprising the business from a very early date. Restrained in a straitjacket, chained to the bedstead, fed "like a dog", Cruden's description is of a harsh, heartless, vile place. It is hard to judge quite how bad a place Wright's was without knowing the amount of terror struck in the hearts of the attendants by a frightening, agitated, angry man, nor whether he was describing a temporary attempt to control his wildness for an hour or two or habitual unwarranted cruelty. Cruden had a barber to dress his wig three times a week, his relatives visited him, he wrote and smuggled letters out, (via the barber) and supervision was lax enough to allow him to escape over the Asylum wall one night, having sawn his bedstead leg off with a table knife. He brought an ill-conceived action against Wright, Wightman, Monro and "the Blind Bench" as he named the friend's 'conspirators,' but lost.

It is possible that Wright's original business was at the Red House before he took the lease on the White House. Cruden refers to 'Mrs Wright's', presumably because she had the day-to-day care of patients, but it was run by the couple as a joint business; this being usual for private asylums. Elianor Wright continued the business after Wright's death, appearing in the Land Tax Book in 1754 as proprietor of 'The Great House.'¹²

The following year, 1755 George Potter acquired the business. The poet Christopher (Kit) Smart was an inmate from 1759 to 1763. His daughter Mrs Le Noir recalled visiting him there and being "received in a small neat parlour". In a letter written in 1831, she recalls that he received visitors, dug the garden and played with his cat.¹³ He must also have spent time writing because Smart's "greatest work," the poem

¹² **Land Tax Book** St Matthew Bethnal Green 1754 THA

Jubilate Agno was written, according to the editors of his works, between 1758 and 1763.¹⁴ It is reckoned he must have written 3 stanzas regularly every day although only fragments remain.

Jubilate Agno is a work of profound madness, an overlong ecstatic repetitive hymn of praise that is both joyous and ludicrous. His language is peculiarly personal, lyrical, allusive and emotive but descends into the idiotic at times. Smart is said to praise his cat in the poem—it was the compelling thought that something might be learnt of the Bethnal Green Asylum cat that sent the author searching for the poem in the first place—but if he does, then he also praises worms, beetles, frogs in the brambles, lions, dromedaries, at least six varieties of dog and a hundred or so other creatures. There are parts of this crazy creation where he is reeling off the names of his friends or types of animals or birds, testing his memory in the way detained people do to pass the hours. This is one way those plagued with delusions attempt to control the storm of hideous intrusions. When he's poring over the Books of the Old Testament, reeling off tribes, prophets and heroes, the poem descends into a banal list characteristic of the poverty of ideation of a mind struggling to constrain psychosis.

Smart's friend Sam Johnson, one of the friends he paid tribute to in *Jubilate Agno*, visited him at Bethnal Green. The following passage from Boswell is well enough known but worth retelling. Dr Charles Burney asked Johnson how Smart was and whether he was likely to recover:-

JOHNSON: It seems as if his mind has ceased to struggle with the disease; for he grows fat upon it.

BURNEY: Perhaps Sir, that may be from want of exercise.

JOHNSON: No, Sir, he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. [And added] Before his confinement he used to exercise to walk to the ale-house; but he was *carried* back again...I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him: and

¹³ Letter from Mrs Le Noir 1831 in Smart Papers, Durham Cathedral Chapter Library quoted in Robinson And Chesshyre 1986 op cit p11

¹⁴ Smart C c1760 *Jubilate Agno*, in K Williamson (ed) *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart* 1980 Oxford Clarendon Press Vol 1.

I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it.

Madness, Johnson said "frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world." Smart was wont to fall on his knees in the street to pray, "For I blessed God in St James' Park 'til I routed all the Company",¹⁵ logically more rational, Johnson thought, than the greater madness of those who never pray at all.¹⁶ Smart's later poetry lacks both fervour and joy; much is just piously dull. Madness released his creativity but all his genius seems to have been wrung out in the effort.

George Potter left the business to his son Christopher, a politically ambitious but unsavoury landowner with an estate in Cambridgeshire, including 900 acres of woad, then the principal source of blue dye for uniforms. He was also a major provisions contractor for the British Army during the American War of Independence. He stood for parliament for Colchester three times but was unseated twice for corrupt practices. An election poster of 1781 in the form of taunting questions written by his opponents includes reference to his ownership of the madhouse. "Was it not on account of the bad Treatment suffered by the Unhappy Persons, confined in Private Mad Houses, that those houses were made the Object of Parliamentary Enquiry - The Keepers of them obliged to take out Licences for the future; and their Management subjected to the constant Inspection of the Royal College of Physicians?".¹⁷

Potter was declared bankrupt in 1783, moved to France in 1789 and perhaps inspired by his name, started a successful pottery business.¹⁸ The ownership and management of the mad business becomes a little confused after 1777 but the likeliest explanation according to Robinson is that the proprietor was James Stratton from 1777 until 26th

¹⁵ **Smart C** c1760 Jubilate Agno Fragment B Stanza 89

¹⁶ **Boswell J** 1791 *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 1979 Edition ed C Hibbert Harmondsworth Penguin 97-98

¹⁷ **Lord Rayleigh** 1781 *Some Questions necessary to be answered by Squire Potter*. Privately published pamphlet Copy in THA

¹⁸ **Robinson and Chesshyre** 1986 op cit 13

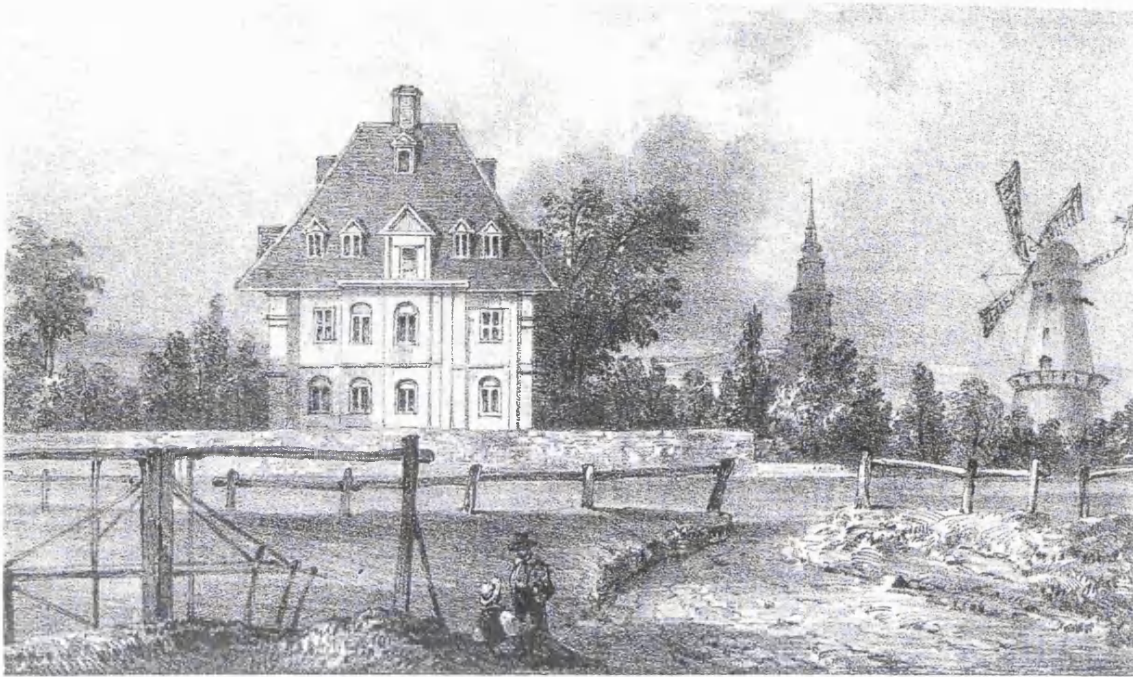


Fig II.1. Balmes House. Published in Robinson's *History and Antiquities of Hackney* (1842), and reputed to be a 1650 view.

Fig II.2 Plan of Balmes House and Estate, published in Robinson's *History and Antiquities of Hackney* (1842), and reputed to be a 1580 view.

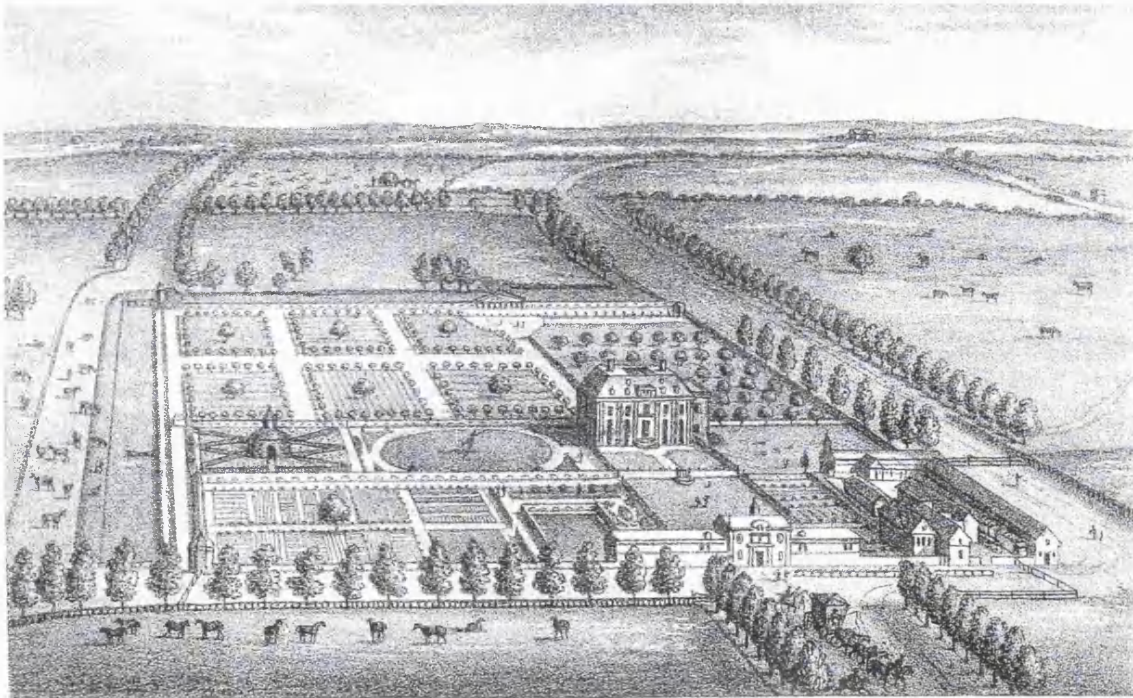


Fig II.1. source Watson I 1990 *Hackney and Stoke Newington Past*. London. Historical Publications

Fig II.2. source Watson I 1990 *Hackney and Stoke Newington Past*. London. Historical Publications

September 1800, when he sold it to Thomas Warburton. It is thought that Stratton employed a Mr Shaw as manager for some time and then Thomas Faux.^{19 20 21}

East London Licensed Houses taking only private patients

Balmes House, later called Whitmore House, Hoxton

*I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word Will harrow up thy soul. (Hamlet, Shakespeare)*²²

Hackney Archives are housed in the Rose Lipman Library which stands on the site of Sir George Whitmore's magnificent Balmes House, a curiously designed famous local landmark, which became one of the most prestigious private asylums in the Metropolitan area at the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries. Now all that remains of this institution is the name, commemorated in the gloomy LCC Whitmore Estate, which lies between St Leonard's (Shoreditch Workhouse) and the Regents Canal, on the route the author takes from the 'workhouse' to the Archives up Whitmore Road and past the end of Balmes Road. A stroll around the Whitmore Estate discovers no blocks named for Whitmore House patients or keepers or even Warburton, just councillors as usual.²³

Balmes House was built in 1540 by the Balm brothers for Sir George Whitmore. The house, originally moated and surrounded by extensive formal gardens in the 17th century style (see *figs II & II2*), was acquired by Richard de Beauvoir in 1680. The house was leased in the middle of the eighteenth century by "an eminent physician",

¹⁹ A print of the White House 1796 in the British Museum is titled Mr Shaw's Madhouse.

²⁰ Sun Insurance Policy 643257 15 July 1795 made out to Thomas Faux "Keeper of Lunatics" for "his dwelling house being three houses communicating", described as "opposite the Green Man on Bethnal Green"

²¹ There is one reference to a madhouse run by a "Mr Vaux" by John Harriott, a Middlesex magistrate in the minutes of evidence of 19 May of the 1815 Select Committee hearings, which I think may refer to this same Faux. Certainly it was not George Vaux, the surgeon at St Luke's who came to the hearings on 19 June to testify that he had never kept a madhouse.

²² Mitford chose this quotation for the introduction to his Crimes and Horrors....pamphlet, see below. Mitford J (published Anonymous) 1825 Crimes and Horrors in the Interior of Warburton's Private Mad House at Hoxton (currently called Whitmore House) copy of first edition in Hackney Archive HAD

Dr Meyer Schomberg (d 1761) for the reception of lunatics²⁴. Hollingshead described it as “a magnificent red brick mansion with a sloping roof full of garret windows as the Hotel Saxe at Dresden. It stood back in a planted courtyard, walled in with heavy gates with an old-fashioned bell-pull at least two yards long.”²⁵ Two maiden aunts of Hollingshead worked as attendants at Whitmore House, one of them Sarah James later went to look after Mary Lamb in her home.

Benjamin Clarke, a local doctor and historian of Hackney’s ancient buildings, writing about the same time as Hollingshead, noted that the imposing entrance gates and sundial “were destroyed by some vandal in 1794, who with equal wondrous taste, put a modern gate in its place.”²⁶ The vandal was Thomas Warburton, who took over the mad business in 1790.

By 1814 Warburton’s, or Whitmore House as it was formally called, had one licence for ‘more than ten’ patients; there were usually between fifty and seventy patients. This was Warburton’s flagship asylum for the wealthy, where fees were carefully tailored to the family’s pocket. No parish paupers were accepted but the reputation of Whitmore House among the better classes may well have given some comfort to Parishes to place their pauper lunatics in Warburton’s other asylums in Bethnal Green (see chapter 3), which specialised in providing care for parish paupers on contract.

Warburton lived in Mare Street, Hackney,²⁷ a member of the Select Vestry and a Trustee of the Poor from 1812 to 1815. He chaired one of the vestry meetings on 29 March 1815, but by 1823 his attendance was so infrequent that he was disqualified from serving as a Trustee.²⁸ He continued to serve as a Trustee for one of Hackney’s almshouse charities until 1835.²⁹

²³ There is however a block of council flats named after Warburton in **Warburton Road E8**.

²⁴ **Robinson E** 1989 op cit p 34; **Watson I** 1990 op cit p28

²⁵ **Hollingshead J** 1895 *My Life and Times*. Vol 1 London p5

²⁶ **Clarke B** 1894 op cit pp233, 234

²⁷ There is a road named after **Warburton** in E8, just near where **Pembroke House** was.

²⁸ **Minutes of the Trustees of the Poor, St John at Hackney** 29 March 1815, Election of Trustees 1 March 1823, P79/JN1/146

²⁹ **Dr Spurstowe’s Charity** notes and records, list of trustees 1834-5 HAD

Arthur Morris's monograph on the Hoxton Madhouses covers the horrific conditions in Warburton's pauper houses exposed in the Select Committee on the State of Madhouses in 1815/16.³⁰ Conditions at Whitmore House however were thought to be considerably better. Edward Wakefield³¹ made a rather hurried visit before giving evidence to the Committee. He did not have time to go over all the rooms thoroughly:

I have no reason to believe that the treatment is any other than in general good...in this establishment there are very large gardens; some of the patients pay rather liberally;³² and in those gardens are many small distinct houses, and I wish to draw the attention of the committee to the great benefit of those distinct houses; the enjoyment which a patient who has the means of paying for it, receives from living in a small house, surrounded by a garden without the noise or the annoyance of violent Maniacs around him.³³

³⁰ **Morris A** 1958 *Hoxton Madhouses* published privately Birmingham WIL

³¹ Wakefield's mother **Priscilla Wakefield** (1751-1832) an "authoress of children's books", was "in and out with a paroxysm" according to **Mitford**. Priscilla kept a journal, a copy of extracts, typed out in the early twentieth century (the original is now lost) is deposited in the Wakefield family papers, box 4, item 2, held by Mrs Priscilla Mitchell, nee Wakefield, a direct descendant of the first Priscilla and of Edward Wakefield. There is a microfilm copy in the Archives of the National Library of New Zealand AJCP film M 2794-5. Mrs Mitchell, in her 90s, was living in Totnes Devon TQ9 5DZ in 1999. She plans to deposit the papers with her cousin Mr Torlesse or with a university after her death). The journal for 1812 to 13, when Mitford claimed to have seen her does not contain any reference to a stay in Whitmore House but does contain a mountain of worries about money, debts, and on some occasions reference to being low and dispirited. Her financial problems were real enough. Her husband was a hopeless businessman and was in debt first to his cousin and then a brother in law most of his adult life. To add to her worries neither Edward, who had 8 children, nor Dan another son, were reliable bread winners and her grandson Edward Gibbon Wakefield (the founder of New Zealand) was even more profligate. Priscilla emerges from the Journals as the steadiest most well adjusted person in the family. She and her husband were forced to move from their home in Tottenham in March 1812 and they went to stay with her daughter Isabella in Ipswich. On April 2 1812 she wrote "My spirits low and views confused. Altogether it is too much for my powers mentally and bodily". In January the following year she noted "The same anxiety that has distressed me for so many years still hovers over me and my health is unequal to the struggle". She had problems walking because of weak legs in her later years. None of these entries is proof of mental disturbance. Neither his mother nor his wife, Susan were mentioned by Edward Wakefield at the hearings. There is evidence from Priscilla's Journal that her sister Chrissy Hankin had episodes of serious nervous disposition of a depressed, low-spirited kind and Edward's first wife Susan definitely suffered from episodes of mental distress and was in a madhouse intermittently round about this time (source David Moss.). It seems possible that Mitford, who may well have embroidered his account with hearsay and rumour, mixed up the two Wakefield women. It is also possible that the family member who subsequently edited the journal excluded material they considered unseemly. There is not one mention of Priscilla's husband anywhere in her letters and journals yet the whole thing comprises chatty but sharp and honest gossip about her children, grandchildren and friends. Her letters reveal an insightful, tolerant and forgiving soul.

³² **Mitford** reported that The Duke of Atholl paid £1000 a year for his son, the Marquess of Tullibardine; Lord Sidmouth paid £1500 a year and Lord De Dunstanville paid £1200 for his brother, others paid well over £5-600. Mitford's fees were £300 for 9 months plus £90 apothecaries fees for medicines.

Wakefield had originally gone to visit a 'friend' (his mother/wife, see note) and while there he had spoken to several other patients. Later in the Inquiry, he spoke quite warmly of Warburton: "I entertain a very high opinion of his humanity and the discriminating way in which he treats persons labouring under this dreadful malady", the highest praise for a man vilified by the Select Committee and posterity. On the other hand Wakefield was embarrassed at the time by Warburton's exposure to the Committee of Wakefield's involvement in the plot to 'spring a patient, Reverend Chawner out of Whitmore House which ended predictably badly.³⁴ If his mother was a regular customer of Warburton's he may have been reluctant to upset further the person she might turn to again in the future.

Wakefield returned to Whitmore House two years later on Saturday 24th February 1816 in the company of Lord Robert Seymour, Chairman of the 1816 hearings, and Lord Binning³⁵.

The visit was certainly unexpected by Mr Warburton, who we found at Whitmore House and who immediately took us to the basement story which has been called "the regions below", this apartment was occupied by eight or nine females, some of whom were not aware of the necessities of nature; and upon the whole there was nothing that struck me to find fault with in the comforts which they received there; it appeared to me that the rooms were clean and the apartments had the advantage, although the basement story of the house itself, still as it respected the gardens, was a ground floor as there was a door out of the sitting room which opened into a garden from the basement story. I went into a large room called the lower tapestry, in which were four ladies and a female keeper; this room has in it four turn-up beds, which have the appearance in the day time of book-cases; the room is large and particularly airy; and it was really a pleasure to see beings under so miserable a disease as well treated as they appeared to be, during the short visit that was paid.

The visit lasted about three hours and was extended to the whole house, the general comfort and cleanliness of which can deserve nothing but approbation. The house

³³ **Select Committee on the State of Madhouses** 1815 Minutes of Evidence 19

³⁴ During Wakefield's visit he was approached by a patient the **Rev. Charles Chawner**, who appeared sane to Wakefield. He unwisely engineered Chawner's escape and with the help of an advocate friend of his barrister brother, secured Chawner's freedom. Chawner then went voluntarily into Fisher House, Islington, where Sutherland and others certified him sane. He returned home to Derbyshire, only to end up in Nottingham gaol for debts owed for legal bills for the work of the various lawyers involved in his suit. Warburton had the great satisfaction of pointing out to Wakefield the results of his interference. Somewhat contrite for the manner in which the affair had been conducted Wakefield nevertheless pointed out how difficult it was for someone certified insane to get out once confined. (SC 1815 op cit 19,188)

³⁵ **Select Committee on Madhouses** 1816 op cit Minutes of Evidence 36

stands in the midst of very fine gardens of the extent of five acres, and such of the patients that can enjoy it when convalescent are allowed to amuse themselves by keeping fowl or rabbits, or cultivating a small piece of garden ground.

The same year the Commissioners agreed that Whitmore House “was a good house” but noted that while the rooms were large, the Commissioners never saw the sleeping arrangements because the beds were mostly “press-beds” (camp beds or beds folding up into the wall).³⁶

John Birch Sharpe, the young surgeon at Miles, had treated a private patient at Whitmore House in 1814 and had seen inside the upper gallery at 7 o’ clock one evening. The gallery, which was entered through a hatchway and makeshift door, was packed with small temporary beds put up each night “so there was just room for a man’s legs between”.³⁷ The Metropolitan Commissioners never visited at night and never counted whether the number of beds was sufficient for the ninety or so patients.³⁸

Two further contemporary accounts paint a strikingly different picture of conditions for patients. The best known of these was a pamphlet published by John Mitford, the dissolute and intermittently paranoid ultra-radical who was a patient at Whitmore House between May 1812 and March 1813³⁹. The second was by the visiting apothecary assistant to John Dunston, who having been sacked by Warburton, wrote a pamphlet in November 1815 which in part led to the resumed parliamentary hearings of 1816⁴⁰. Mitford’s account, published anonymously but readily attributable by the manifestly deluded self-important content in his own story, is perhaps embroidered for effect—his account of Warburton’s life history doesn’t quite tally with Rogers’—

³⁶ **Ibid** 80-81

³⁷ **Ibid** 64

³⁸ This may not seem such an obvious thing to check but it was common in the mid 1980’s for residential home owners to pack in more elderly patients than there was room or a licence, to cash in on lucrative social security grants. The author inspected a home in Lewisham where there were a suspiciously large number of people in the dayroom compared with the registered number of beds. Beds were borrowed every night from the neighbours in the house next door, for a modest fee of course and if necessary temporary beds put up.

³⁹ **Mitford J** (Anonymous) 1825 Crimes and Horrors in the interior of Warburton’s Private Mad House at Hoxton (currently called Whitmore House) First edition copy HAD

but his descriptions of the suffering and abuses of his fellow patients are convincing. Mitford doesn't complain much about his own treatment, apart from one occasion when he was "forcibly confined to the gallery".⁴¹ On the contrary he was treated well; he sometimes dined with Warburton, and on at least one occasion he was allowed out after dinner to go to the theatre with a friend.⁴² He apparently returned after this outing of his own accord, suggesting perhaps that some of the ranting against his detention was post-hoc rationalisation.

Mitford's account of Warburton, whether accurate or not, is the one everyone remembers.⁴³ "More than six feet high, broad, heavy built with knock-knees and "a proboscis three inches long....I heard the King said 'Take away that fellow with the long nose—take him away-away-away'.". According to Mitford, Warburton started life as a butcher's apprentice in the country but fled to London when "a bastard child was sworn to him". First employed as a gate porter at Whitmore House, he "obtained a footing as a servant ... being expert at conveying liquor in to the house for keepers to dispose of among the patients". With "help and industry" he learnt to read and write and worked his way up to first keeper. When the physician/proprietor died, he married the widow and thus became the owner himself. Left with no physician, Warburton raised the £200 to engage Dr Robert Willis, Francis Willis's son, for a year," "who soon had the wards filled". Jemmy Davis, the most notorious of the thuggish keepers employed by Warburton at the Bethnal Green Houses exposed by the Select Committee hearings, was quickly promoted to Head Keeper.

Whether Mitford's account of Warburton is accurate is doubtful. On the other hand who can guess what Warburton might have swaggered about to Mitford over a glass or two of wine? John Rogers had Warburton marrying someone else but the general theme of a vulgarian promoted by luck and cunning is very much the same. What we

⁴⁰ **Rogers JW** 1816 A Statement of the Cruelties, Abuses and Frauds which are practised in Private Madhouses. 17 November 1815, THA L 2911. LC 621.35

⁴¹ **Mitford** 1825 op cit 18

⁴² **Ibid** 22

⁴³ **Ibid** 2,3

know for sure is that Warburton acquired the lease from the De Beauvoir estate and the ownership of the business in 1790.⁴⁴

Mitford's account lists the patients he remembers of the fifty or so who were there during his time. He draws a distinction between those who paid the 'first price', who were allowed to use the front parlour, received reasonable food and wine and were tolerably well treated and the vast majority. Most were robbed of any decent clothing relatives sent, fed on poor food and thin bitter porter "the meat commonly stinking abominably in summer", and beaten if their behaviour was less than compliant or just plain irritating. The sexual abuse of the young and vulnerable, the tying up and flogging of the awkward and helpless and the generally dehumanising and degrading treatment were no doubt a consequence of callous brutishness and thoughtless ignorance of an all too familiar kind. A handful of the specific incidents will give a flavour of the whole:

p8. Miss Rolleston, daughter of Stephen Rolleston Esq., Chief Clerk in the Secretary of State's Office. Regularly beaten by keeperess Mrs Radley.

p2, 10. Mr Gallimore, "Orator" Hunt's brother, cleans knives and washes dishes in the kitchen, badly beaten by keepers

p8. "A widow of a Captain of Marines" "flogged with a rope and tied to a bedpost for a week—the stench in the room became abominable" "strapped down on a tester bed ... various indignities"

p10. Mr Church "a man of fortune" who'd completed the grand tour and "brought home all the continental vices" was allowed repeatedly to abuse sexually the son of a colonel in the room of another patient, Huck.

p12. Captain Anderson, Royal Navy, worked in the garden, "often thrashed by the gardeners"

p14. Mrs Wakefield, children's book authoress frequently "in and out with a paroxysm" "stripped and left in the cellar" when in a distressed condition.

⁴⁴ Watson 1990 op cit 59

p28. Mr Daniels- “harmless lunatic, strums on the pianoforte” “locked in the gallery or an unheated room unclad..., horsewhipped when became obstinate”

and so on and so on.....

Rogers, who visited Whitmore House twice a week or so to prescribe medicines, recalled that “the dirty incontinent cases are dragged out from their sleeping places and are forced with no covering but shorts in to the yard where there is a pump under which they are compelled to stand and are mopped down by a keeper –this in all weathers”.

Problem patients were kept in the cellar apartments. It was here that Mitford and Rogers witnessed the most shocking neglect. Captain Hay was reputed to have been kept in the cellar for 20 years; old Colonel Gillespie was lying in his own wet and filth, “his back completely raw”. There were four rooms in the cellar; one empty; one “full of jumber”, the third had “a bed where punishment patients were kept”. Mitford had seen people strapped down and punished “so as to make respiration painful and difficult”. He also saw a wretched old man said to have been kept in filthy conditions for the past seven years. Stinking privies with no drains, an abysmal state of uncleanness in the upper galleries and rooms where no visitors entered, none of these were ever seen by the Visiting College Physicians on their visits. Patients' personal belongings which had a resale value were stolen by the keepers.⁴⁵ Warburton's keepers were an assortment of “common strumpets” who slept with the patients or thugs. Kelly, Mitford claimed, was an army deserter; another had “served 14 years in Botany Bay”. Penlington, a relative of Warburton, was a drunkard, Jemmy Davis the most brutal. It is impossible to say how accurate these descriptions are; Mitford was no model of sobriety himself. We can assume that Warburton's staff were not ideal professional 'carers'.

Robert Willis of that notable family of 'mad experts' was employed as asylum physician from round about 1790 to 1815 until he became so fully occupied with “the

⁴⁵ Ibid 27-28

situation of great responsibility”⁴⁶ that Warburton engaged a Doctor Ainslie, who had filled in previously for Willis’ absences.⁴⁷ Until he was dismissed, (it is not clear why he was), John Rogers, the apothecary who worked with John Dunston, Warburton’s son-in-law, at the Bethnal Green Houses, provided extra medical assistance. Rogers gave the Select Committee the impression he resented Dunston being favoured with having work put his way by Warburton; he was certainly eager to spill the beans about what he’d seen at Whitmore House and the shocking conditions at Warburton’s pauper houses. By the time Edward Wakefield made his second visit in late 1816, specifically to view the basement apartments, Warburton had had plenty of time to smarten things up and alter the living arrangements.

Warburton’s performance before the Select Committee suggests a puzzled air of pained hurt that anyone should criticise his standards of care. He remained confident of the management of violent lunatics of all classes—violent pauper lunatics could readily be controlled with a leg lock and manacles. Moving round was good for them so “if, as is often the case, the lunatic was so bad as to kick at any person he came near, the only restraint put upon him was what I should call hobbles, almost in the manner you would put round a cow when milking....”

Lunatics of all classes, he opined, could be easily controlled with a stout straight-waistcoat—with one hand free to move about. Occupation, employment and amusement suitable for the higher classes in appropriately comfortable surroundings were Warburton’s general prescription.

Warburton’s business arrangement with Thomas Dunston, steward of St Luke’s Hospital and his son-in-law’s father, were both convenient and lucrative. St Luke’s took patients with an income of below £80 per year but who had modest means. Those who were too rich were passed on to Whitmore House, those too poor to Bethnal Green. Most Bethnal Green referrals had been in St Luke’s for a year but remained uncured; they had to be discharged under the Hospital rules. Dunston swore

⁴⁶ **Warburton** was also involved in the treatment of George III. **Macalpine I, Hunter R** 1969 *George III and the Mad-Business*. London Allen Lane 113-115

he had “never received a shilling in his life” as a result of the relationship with Warburton but Rogers told the 1816 Inquiry that Dunston received an annual fee of £500 per annum for recommending patients to Warburton’s.⁴⁸ Dunston thereby solved St Luke’s problem of what to do with chronic cases who were ‘time-expired’ at the voluntary hospital and assisted his son’s father-in-law’s business in the accepted nepotistic manner of the day, and making a very welcome profit on the side.

Following the Select Committee’s Report, Warburton reduced the number of beds to a more manageable 50. He often alluded during the hearings to his foreboding that licensed houses would be abolished altogether as a result of the Inquiry so he must have been relieved to be able to continue with all his businesses more or less in tact. And curiously, in spite of Mitford and Rogers and the Select Committee Whitmore House continued to attract private patients.

By 1829, Warburton had handed over the business to his physician son Dr John Warburton,⁴⁹ a man of strikingly different character from his father who was to transform Bethnal Green Asylum from the worst to the best asylum for paupers in the Metropolis over the course of the next 20 years.⁵⁰ Bearing the name Warburton could not have been easy in the decades before and after 1820 and he certainly made up for his father’s failings with distinction.⁵¹

John Warburton died fairly young and the business was left to his son John Abernethy Warburton, who also died early, age 25. He left the business in trust for his son Thomas Frederick Warburton and his daughter, and they in turn left it to the last Thomas Warburton, who died in the late 19th century. Whitmore House was registered under the name of Charles Beverley in 1847 but changed in 1851 to Miss Sarah Benfield, who quickly moved most of the patients to another establishment, Derwentwater House in West London. The following year there were only 10 patients

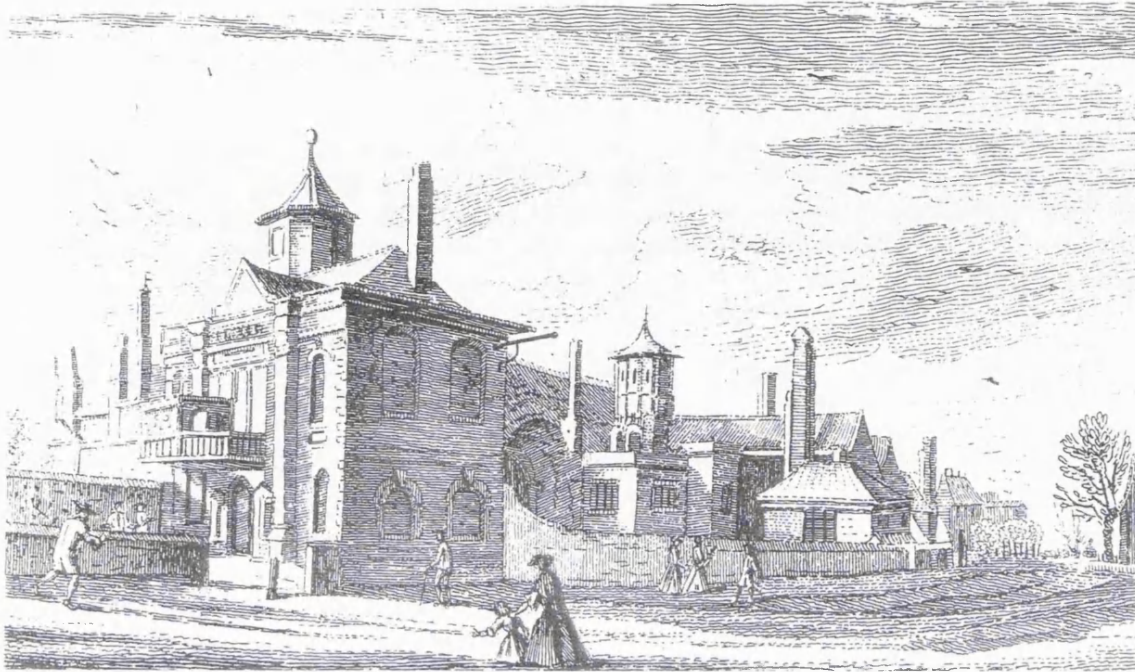
⁴⁷ Select Committee 1816 op cit 191

⁴⁸ Ibid p191

⁴⁹ Annual Returns to the Commissioners in Lunacy, Licensed Houses in the Metropolis, 1829, 1830 PRO HO 44/51

⁵⁰ See *Bethnal Green Asylum*, Chapter 3

⁵¹ For a biographical note on John Warburton, see Appendix C



Brooke House from the south-east, in 1750. By Chatelain.

Fig II.3. source Watson I 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington Past. London, Historical Publications

Fig II.4. source Watson I 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington Past. London, Historical Publications

. The east front of Brooke House in 1844. By G. Toussaint.



left at Whitmore House.⁵² Medical treatment was still being supplied by a Dr Willis in 1846, his treatment of melancholia was as follows.⁵³

After clearing the stomach and bowels by means of purgatives and emetics, the volatile tincture of guaiacum, the infusion of cascarilla and the warm bath and flesh brush with...emetics, purgatives and blisters.... The late Mr Warburton told me that previous to his acquaintance with my family, bleeding and antimonials was the practice in use at his establishments and that many patients died.

Foulkes, Ivy Lane, Hoxton. This small mad-house appears in the Register of 1813. Prosecuted by the Commissioners in Lunacy (Budd v. Foulkes), via the office of the Treasurer of Royal College of Physicians, for keeping 4 people, “more than one lunatic” in an unregistered house. Fined £400. The fine was paid by Thomas Dunston, who is assumed to have been the proprietor.

Mrs Glanville’s, Kingsland Road, Hoxton. Registered for 8 patients in the period around the 1814-16 Select Committee hearings, the house was owned by Warburton and used as an out-placement from Whitmore House.

Licensed House, Kingsland Crescent, Hoxton. Another overspill house for Warburton

Brooke House, Upper Clapton. The origins of Brooke House are distinguished. Built originally as King’s Place, it stood at the junction of Lower Clapton Road and Brooke Road. It is believed to have been built in the late 15th century⁵⁴ and passed in the 1530’s from Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland to Thomas Cromwell and then to Henry VIII, who visited the house on several occasions.⁵⁵ It was here Henry met

⁵² **Annual Returns to the Commissioners in Lunacy 1852** op cit.

⁵³ **2nd Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1846** Appendix L Treatment of Melancholia submitted by Dr Willis

⁵⁴ **Watson I** 1995 Ibid p25

⁵⁵ There is a convoluted history of the earliest building on this site in **Dr Benjamin Clarke’s** Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington, 1894 (reprinted 1986 London Borough of Hackney and The Hackney Society), 208-211 which has a number of stories of doubtful authenticity involving Henry IV and the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, taken from William Robinson’s 1842 History of Hackney. Clarke was a Hackney general medical practitioner, historian and popular writer for the

and was reconciled with his daughter Mary in 1536; his Lord Chancellor used the house as a refuge from the plague raging in London in 1544. It was occupied by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford and his wife until his death in 1604 when the house was bought by Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke- and hence Brooke House.⁵⁶ The Greville family occupied it for two centuries, rebuilding parts in the 17th century and adding gothic features in the 18th century. Too large for the convenience of the family and in a neighbourhood losing its aristocratic cachet, it was sold to James Monro in 1758 specifically for institutional use as an asylum.

John Evelyn found it a “despicable building” and Pepys didn’t care for it either. Both had been drawn to see the gardens, which Pepys thought “excellent”. He found a great variety of exotic plants and “several Labarinths and a pretty aviary”. Pepys saw oranges growing for the first time and boldly stole one. It was “just as other small green oranges are”. Watson, whose account this is taken from, surmises that Brooke House grounds were probably very similar to the illustrations of the gardens at Balmes House (Whitmore House), see illustrations ^{Figs II.3 & II.4}. Writing in 1892 Clarke observed that “the grounds are very park-like and kept in splendid order” and “beautifully laid out with carpet bedding at this moment in glorious colouring”.⁵⁷ The illustrations of Brooke House suggest that the building was transformed architecturally in the late 18th century.

Owned by the Monros, that “veritable dynasty”⁵⁸ of Bethlem physicians, Brooke House had been the flagship of several Licensed Houses that John Monro operated in the eighteenth century. He had others at Clapham and Clerkenwell.⁵⁹ The dynasty began with James Monro in 1728 and his great-grandson Edward Thomas Monro

Hackney Mercury who practiced from 1847 to 1898 in Mare Street in an 1830s bow-fronted building which remained a GP surgery until 1986 (**Mander D** Introduction to Clarke op cit xv-xviii)

⁵⁶ **Clarke 1894** op cit 209, reports that Brooke was murdered in 1628 at his other residence in Holborn by his servant Ralph Hayward, who immediately after committed suicide.

⁵⁷ **Ibid** 210

⁵⁸ **Scull A, Mackenzie C, Hervey N** 1996 *Masters of Bedlam: the Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade*. Princeton N J, Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 A Bethlemetical Mad-Doctor: John Haslam (1764-1844), 15,17. See also numerous references to John, James, Thomas, Henry and E T Monro in the same work.

⁵⁹ **Ibid** John Monro’s Clapham mad-house case register of 1766 survives, see footnote 54 p280

ended it in the late 1850's when he was himself confined as a lunatic in his own madhouse.⁶⁰

None of the Monros emerges with great distinction from the descriptions of their successful milking of the mad trade.⁶¹ Thomas Monroe, who was the proprietor-physician to Brooke House at the beginning of the nineteenth century was possibly more interested in water-colour painting than in pursuing his family's practice or attending to his duties as physician to Bethlem.⁶² Monroe was required to put in a brief appearance at Bethlem only twice a week and attend a regular weekly meeting one other day, leaving him plenty of time to pursue a lucrative private practice.⁶³

By 1830, Brooke House was licensed for 50 patients. Day to day superintendence was provided by the resident Misses Pettingall,⁶⁴ the proprietor Dr Monroe giving an address in the Adelphi in the Returns to the Metropolitan Commissioners. The Commissioners' habitual phrase of satisfaction without necessarily expressing enthusiasm after a visit was "house in good order" and this was their usual description of their visits every six months between 1829 and 31. On 14 July 1830, for example, Turner, Clitherow, Hampson and Southey reported "This house is in its usual good state. Divine Service is regularly performed to the patients without being productive of any benefit". It is not clear whose view on the benefits of religious services was

⁶⁰ *Ibid* footnote 51, 280, see also Hervey N PhD Thesis 1987 Bristol University The Lunacy Commission 1845-1860 with special reference to the Implementation of Policy in Kent and Surrey

⁶¹ Andrews J, Briggs A, Porter R, Tucker P and Waddington K 1998 *The History of Bethlem*. London Routledge, see chapters 23, 25 and pp269,273ff, 446; see also Thomas Monroe's evidence to *Select Committee on Madhouses* 1815, Minutes of Evidence 90

⁶² Monroe was a great patron of water-colour artists and founded round about 1794 what was called 'the Monroe Academy', whose members included J M W Turner, Thomas Girtin, John and Cornelius Varley, John Cotman and Peter de Wint. At regular meetings at Monroe's House at Bushey in Hertfordshire they met, copied watercolours and criticised each other's work. William Henry Hunt, now known as 'bird's nest Hunt' to distinguish him from 'The Light of the World' William Holman Hunt, was patronised in a major way by Monroe, who commissioned between 1808 and 1820's numerous drawings of Bushey scenes and Monroe's house at Bushey, some of which were sold at Sotheby's in 1997. Hunt would stay a month at a time with Monroe, being paid 7s 6d a day. Monroe was a rigorous critic—he would come up behind Hunt, displace him from his chair and "wipe out with a sponge" the bits he didn't like. Monroe amassed a huge collection that was dispersed after his death in 1833, including 168 by Hunt. See William Henry Hunt by Charles Hind in *Antique Collecting*, September 1998 pp10-15

⁶³ See George Waller's comments under Pembroke House.

⁶⁴ *Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy* May 1829-November 1831 PRO HO44/51 f1-f18

expressed here, the Commissioners or the Superintendents'. Six months later, "the house is in good order," a year later they were marginally more enthusiastic, "the house is very comfortable". The Commissioners recorded the names of those admitted but only in 1830 their place of origin. There were then a handful of local Hackney and Stoke Newington patients, Margaret Horsbrugh for example, an elderly woman of 75, lived locally in Clapton.⁶⁵

The Commissioners may have been satisfied, although their inquiries seem to have been generally undertaken in a rather desultory fashion in the pre-Ashley days, their reports usually comprising no more than a couple of lines. Paternoster, writing in 1841, provides an unattractive account of the physical aspects of the institution.⁶⁶ Although he was writing in the context of a more general vilification of the madhouse system, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his detailed description of this or the other two houses he included in his essay, Finch's House, Kensington and Blacklands House, Chelsea. Of Brooke House he wrote:

It is licensed for 50 patients, who are under the charge of the Misses Pettingal, Dr Monro residing in Cavendish Square, and going only occasionally to Clapton to give general orders and arrange accounts... The present number of patients is males-16, and females 20. The house is an old-fashioned dilapidated sort of place, to which a modern front has been attached, which fails to give any idea of what the interior is. The situation is low and damp, and devoid of any prospect. Immediately behind the house is a grass plot of about thirty paces square, surrounded by a high wall. This, with the exception of the gravel walk round it, was entirely underwater. Beyond was an extensive kitchen garden in which the female prisoners...were allowed to walk....Not one foot of pleasure garden, no flowers, no shady walks, no seats, nothing whatever pretty or agreeable.

Paternoster was told that attempts to drain the ground had been made at great expense but had been unsuccessful. In one corner of the "green swamp" there was "a gloomy looking building of about seven feet square" which served as a "cell for the refractory". In the female section he noted that the patients' rooms, off the long galleries

looked out onto a small courtyard, surrounded by buildings and some into the green swamp where the male prisoners are allowed to walk round and round. They were

⁶⁵ **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** December 1830 PRO HO44/51 f15

⁶⁶ **Paternoster R** 1841 the Madhouse System. London

most wretchedly furnished with old-fashioned lattice windows, letting the wind in so as to defy all attempts at keeping them warm...and with thick iron bars outside which would effectually prevent escape.

The physical environment may have been poor but the quality of care that patients experienced under the Pettingall sisters' is unknown. Henry Monro refused permission in 1826 for the campaigning radical land agent Edward Wakefield to visit Brooke House on the grounds that he would first have to get permission from the relatives of all the resident patients.⁶⁷

Thomas Monro took a fairly cavalier approach to treatment of patients at Bethlem. Coming under heavy fire from the Select Committee of 1815 inquiring into conditions at Bethlem, Monro was asked *"Would you treat a private individual patient at your own house in the same way as has been described in respect of Bethlem?"* He replied "Certainly not!" *"Why is not the restraint by chains and fetters in your private house?"* "There is such a number of servants there is no occasion; I have forty odd patients and as many servants." *"You have stated that chains and fetters are fit only for pauper lunatics; what do you mean by that answer?"* "I mean of course that pauper lunatics of course cannot pay for the regular attendance to prevent their doing mischief; and there are so few servants kept for this purpose but it is the only mode of restraining them."⁶⁸

Monro confessed to having little faith in medicines, treatments were largely determined by the seasons and habit:

In the months of May, June, July, August and September we generally administer medicines, we do not do so in the winter season because the house [Bethlem] is so excessively cold that it is not thought proper...We apply generally bleeding, purging, and vomit; those are the general remedies we apply...All the patients who require bleeding are generally bled on a particular day...and after they have been bled they take vomits once a week for a certain number of weeks, after that we purge the patients....That has been the practice invariably for years, long before my time; it was handed down to me by my father, and I do not know any better practice.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ PP Select Committee on the State of Madhouses in England 1815 Minutes of Evidence p17

⁶⁸ Ibid 93,95,99f

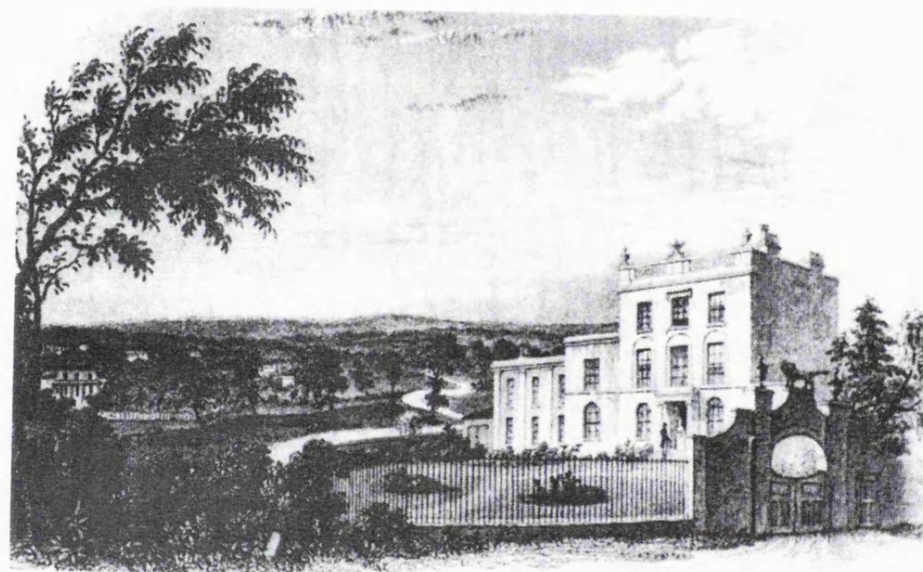


Fig II.5. **Northumberland House, Woodberry Down** in the 1840s. unknown artist,
source Watson I 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington Past. London, Historical Publications

I really do not depend a vast deal upon medicine; I do not think medicine is the sheet anchor; it is more by management that those patients are cured than by medicine; ...if I am obliged to make that public I must do so.⁷⁰

After E T Monro's death the proprietorship of the licensed house passed to another Monro, a solicitor. He went into partnership with the "talented and genial" Dr Adams, "a thoroughly practical medical man", who served as resident physician up to the 1890s.⁷¹ Brooke House continued as a private asylum until the Second World War but was damaged by bombing in 1940 and acquired by a Hackney Borough Council in March 1944. The degree of damage was not so great that restoration was impossible but the house was carefully demolished and recorded in 1954-5, this forming the basis for volume XXVIII of the Survey of London.⁷² It seems that the historical significance of the building was only realised during the demolition. Various artefacts survive, including a wall painting from the late fifteenth century chapel which is now on display in the Museum of London, and "a sizeable amount of panelling" which is now in Harrow School. In her book on *Lost Hackney*, Robinson remarks that "this building must rate as Hackney's greatest loss this century".⁷³

Northumberland House, Green Lanes. Built in 1822 and demolished in 1955,⁷⁴ Northumberland House stood 200yds north of Manor House tube station facing the east side of Green Lanes, the New River forming the northern boundary of the grounds. For many centuries, the site was owned by St Paul's Cathedral as part of the manor of Stoke Newington. The manor became vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1843. The freehold was bought by the London County Council (LCC) in 1954 to build an extension of the Woodberry Down Estate, the site being renamed Rowley Gardens, *see fig. II-5*

⁶⁹ *Ibid* p99

⁷⁰ Twenty-five years later, Williams at Pembroke House and Conolly at Hanwell expressed similar sentiments to the Lunacy Commission in their descriptions of their approach to the management of insanity. The difference was that Monro was therapeutically nihilistic, they used their scepticism as an excuse to try other approaches. (*2nd Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1846* Appendix, Treatment of Mania)

⁷¹ Adams was described by his "good friend" Benjamin Clarke in *Clarke 1894* op cit 208

⁷² *Robinson E 1989* *Lost Hackney*. London Hackney Society Publications 28

⁷³ *Ibid* 28

Joseph Eade took a lease on the land in 1812; Stephen Cundee, who built the house, had a sub-lease from Eade in 1824, according to Gosnell,⁷⁵ whose hand-written account of Northumberland House, focusing mainly on the buildings, is kept in Hackney Archive. Gosnell is not wholly accurate in his account of the House as an asylum so he may be inaccurate in other details.

Gosnell wrote that the house was built as a private residence and was not used as an asylum until Mr and Mrs Richard Birkett advertised it as an Asylum in 1835 but the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy recorded it as a Licensed House in 1829.⁷⁶ The proprietor was Samuel Fox until 1829 when the Birketts first appeared in the Metropolitan Commissioners' annual reports. The Commissioners noted that the House admitted its first patient in 1813. The recorded dates may well be incorrect but one possible interpretation is that Samuel Fox operated a Licensed House from 1813 and moved his business to Northumberland House shortly after it was built, then sold it on to the Birketts in 1829. This would tally with the dates when it is recorded that one Samuel Fox owned a Licensed House called London House, variously recorded as in London Lane, Hackney or Norton Folgate (now part of Hackney) in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The House disappears from the Returns to the Metropolitan Commissioners by 1820 (see London House below).

Gosnell notes that the 1835 prospectus mentioned charges from 1½-5gns per week but does not record where he found the prospectus. In 1850, Birkett acquired the lease of a further 3½ acres. The asylum was run by members of the Birkett family until 1877, when it was taken over as a going concern by Dr Alonzo Stocker.⁷⁷ Stocker acquired a new lease in 1906 but died in 1912. In 1878 the medical superintendent was Dr Francis James Wright MD. After Dr Stocker's death the asylum was retained by the

⁷⁴ **Gosnell P** 1962 Northumberland House Green Lanes Pamphlet Y2861 Class 362.1 NOR (HAD)

⁷⁵ **Ibid** 3

⁷⁶ **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** 1829-31 Series HO44/51, no f1-f18 (PRO)

⁷⁷ There were two **Stocker**s in the mad trade, **James Stocker** Medical Superintendent of Guy's Lunatic Asylum in 1854 and **Dr Alonzo H Stocker** who was medical superintendent of Grove Hall, Bow in the 1850's. Since it is unlikely the one man practised for 50 years, although it is not impossible, there were probably two Alonzos, father and son. (Names appear in listed opinions in Appendix G on restraints 8th Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1854)

family until the site was acquired by the LCC in 1954. The asylum business moved to Ballard's Lane, Finchley under the direction of Dr Robert Riggall. The following year Northumberland House was demolished.

The name Northumberland House seems to have been Cundee's choice, possibly as a tribute or allusion to Thomas Cundy, a well-known architect and possibly a relative who was contemporaneously working on grand renovations at Northumberland House, Charing Cross. Certainly the Percy family heraldic lions that were copied on the gates of the asylum were a local landmark. An architect wanted to buy them after the house was demolished but the council left them to rot and break up in the grounds. The only connection the Earls of Northumberland had with Hackney was briefly in the 1530's when they owned King's Place (later Brooke House, see above). Watson⁷⁸ remarks on the surprising number of commemoratively named villas, streets and pubs named as a result of this brief connection but possibly also because of Cundee the developer.

By 1830 there were 40 places for private patients. A major expansion must have taken place that year because it was registered for 21 the previous year.⁷⁹ The Birketts did not accept paupers. That year, on 15th May, Lord Ashley was one of a team of four Commissioners who visited for the six monthly inspections, (the others were Baring, Bright and Southey). They found the asylum "in excellent order".

We know little of the treatments used at Northumberland House but W.T Spencer, visiting surgeon, reported to the Commissioners in 1854 that all mechanical restraints had been abolished in 1850 and that seclusion was very rarely used.⁸⁰

By 1870 the asylum had expanded to four main blocks catering for 70 or so patients, six cottages and six four-storey houses for staff. It remained a sizeable institution until it closed in 1954.⁸¹

⁷⁸ **Watson I** 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington Past. London, Historical Publications 25

⁷⁹ **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** op cit 1829 f1-6

⁸⁰ **8th Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1854** Appendix G p165

⁸¹ **Gosnell** 1962 op cit



Fig II.6. London House, Mare Street Hackney in the 1850s, source HAD.

London House, London Lane, Hackney . (see fig II.6)

The Annual Returns of Licensed Houses for 1814, produced for the Select Committee in 1815 by Dr Richard Powell, Secretary to the Metropolitan Commissioners, includes London House, London Lane, Hackney owned by Samuel Fox and licensed for “more than ten” patients.⁸² By 1849 it had grown to house 25 patients. Edward Wakefield visited the House on his tour of numerous private madhouses and voluntary hospitals in 1813 -14. It was the fourth house he went to and described it to the Select Committee⁸³:

This is a house that I think admirably conducted; Mr Fox is an apothecary, living in Norton Folgate, and it is managed by his wife, who is a judicious, very good-natured woman, whom all the patients seemed very much to respect; every time I was there, Mr Tilley Matthews was living, and in point of fact was the advising manager of the conduct of the patients of that house. It is a large house, capable of the sexes being kept distinct and separate, and they were here classed according to their habits in life; one lady who conceived herself to be Mary, Queen of Scots, acts as preceptress to Mrs Fox’s little children and takes great pains at teaching them French, &c.

The house was roomy and on the dozen or so visits that Wakefield made, when he was taken all over the house and had every case described to him by Matthews, he saw no violence, which he attributed to the quality of treatment. If one of the indicators of a 'good' institution is the success with which the barriers of social distance between staff and their charges have been eradicated, then London House would rate highly, with the involvement of a patient in the proprietor’s children’s education and in the employment of James Tilley Matthews, a celebrated madman lately discharged from Bethlem.⁸⁴

Throughout the 1850s the Proprietor of London House was Dr. Oxley. In 1851 he also acquired a small asylum in Mare Street, Hackney called Grove House. London Lane

⁸² **List of Metropolitan Licensed Houses** 10 November 1814 to 10 November 1815 provided by Dr Richard Powell, Secretary to the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to the Select Committee on the State of Madhouses, Minutes of Evidence 1815 p165

⁸³ **Select Committee on the State of Madhouses**, Minutes of evidence, 1815 Edward Wakefield p16

⁸⁴ The lunatic career of James Tilley Matthews is described pp55-59 in chapter 3 Madness and Power in **Porter R A Social History of Madness: stories of the insane**, 1987, paperback ed’n 1996 London Phoenix

is an alley off Mare Street and it is possible that London House and Grove House were contiguous houses on the corner. They were certainly very close to each other, as they both were to Pembroke House (see below).

Oxley's treatments spanned the conventional range of accepted range of remedies. He was of the old school in the management of disturbed behaviour. As late as 1854 he was reluctant to acknowledge that mechanical restraint could ever be wholly abolished, but "for the last few years I have confined myself to the reception of females labouring under the milder forms of mental disease but if necessary I would use it"⁸⁵.

Grove House, Mare Street, Hackney

This small asylum appeared in the 1849 Returns of Licensed Houses. Sometimes called simply "Mare Street House", it stood near Pembroke House and London House. It opened with six patients, the first proprietor was Mr Ayre. In 1851 Grove House was acquired by Dr Oxley (see London House).

Middlesex House, Hackney Road, Bethnal Green

The proprietor Samuel Cotes opened the House in 1791 for 10 patients. It was subsequently enlarged and then closed in 1811/1812. An advertisement reproduced in Hunter and Macalpine's *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry*⁸⁶ is from an "engraving in four colours" by Harry Ashby the eminent writer engraver. The admission register at St Luke's record the admission of Jane Aldridge, admitted 24th April 1812, discharged 28 August 1812 'cured'. Her securities were put up by "J Hoskins, Middlesex House, Hackney Road".⁸⁷

Sidney House, Hackney Wick

Edward Francis Tuke MD lived at Sidney House from 1828 to 1833, using his home as a Licensed House for five patients of independent means. He moved his home and

⁸⁵ 8th Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1854 Appendix G Treatment of Mania

⁸⁶ Hunter R, Macalpine I 1963 *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry*. London Oxford University Press, fig 108, p526

⁸⁷ Information supplied by Archivist, St Luke's Hospital, admission registers 1806-25.

his business to Chiswick in 1833, establishing a larger Licensed House for wealthy clients.⁸⁸ Tuke's son, Thomas Harrington Tuke married one of John Conolly's two daughters and inherited Conolly's private practice at Lawn House.

Shown on Starling's Map of 1831 as 'Dr Tuke's Lunatic Asylum',⁸⁹ on the corner of Sidney Road at Hackney Wick. The road name was changed in 1838 and the house now stands at the corner of Hassett Road and Kenworthy Road, a Georgian building behind a high wall, not far from the old Hackney Workhouse site, much altered but still recognisably an elegant house. It is now (2000) the Convent of the Sacred Heart. The house was built in 1808-9 by a silk manufacturer Lucy Smith, who owned silk mills at Hackney Wick.

Although licensed for ten patients, Tuke never seems to have had more than five at one time.⁹⁰ In fact there were no patients at all when the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy visited in July 1829 and in March 1830, "the one patient here seems as comfortable as she is capable of". The Commissioners remarked that "the house is very commodious"⁹¹ and "the grounds extensive."⁹² When Commissioners Gordon, Calthorpe, Bright and Southey visited on 22 May 1830 they remarked "This house is an Excellent Establishment and in every respect calls for the approbation of the Commissioners. No patient is capable of attending divine service."⁹³ Seven patients' names were noted in 1830-31, all of whom had been admitted between 1829 and 1831. None had East London addresses. Isobel Watson⁹⁴ surmises that Tuke specialised in "illnesses of the very rich":

Josephine Corbin, of Edgware Road, (no further details recorded)

Charles Webber

Charles Wright married age 36, a wine merchant from Opera Colonnade-certif. Johnson/Reynolds on 14 May 1830 by J Welch.

James Walker 73, 8 Chalton Street, Pancras. 'Artist' by daughter. Cert. Berry/Jones

⁸⁸ **Watson I** 1995 A House at Hackney Wick. Hackney History Vol 1, 25-28

⁸⁹ **Starling's** Map of London 1831, facsimile 1985 HAD M3/2

⁹⁰ **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** July 1829 and May 1830 PRO HO/44/51

⁹¹ **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** July 1829, PRO HO/44/51

⁹² **Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy** November 1829, PRO HO/44/51

⁹³ The Commissioners were making special inquiries that year of the availability of religious worship for patients.

⁹⁴ **Watson I** 1995 op cit p26

James Thorburn from HMS 'Grampus'
Elizabeth Rogers 43 Clarendon Street
Frederick Natousch age 43, 43 Upper Norton Street. Ships' insurance broker.

Pembroke House, Mare Street, Hackney

Waltraud Ernst⁹⁵ has described Pembroke House and its days as an East India Company Lunatic Asylum in some depth and the information given here is almost entirely from her work. There is only a little to add from the Annual Reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy and their Metropolitan predecessors and some information about the building in Hackney Archive.

The East India Company contracted with two private asylums in England to provide treatment and continuing care for European Company employees whose insanity developed during their service in the East. Between 1819 to 1870 patients were shipped back to Pembroke House, Hackney. This became the largest private asylum in the Metropolis which did not admit pauper patients; there were 99 places by 1846.⁹⁶

Pembroke House was an imposing Georgian house in extensive grounds on the west side of Mare Street. The local historian Clarke remembered it had extensive grounds in the 1840s. He thought it was probably built on the site of property owned by the Earl of Pembroke.⁹⁷ It was eventually demolished to make way for the railway and Bayford Street now runs over the site.⁹⁸ The buildings and grounds were extensive enough for there to be a five-fold increase in the number of patients without the need to find new premises.

⁹⁵ **Ernst W** 1998 Asylum Provision and the East India Company in the nineteenth century. *Medical History* 42, 476-502; see also **Ernst W** *Psychiatry and colonialism: the treatment of lunatics in British India 1800-1858* PhD Thesis 1986 University of London and **Ernst W** chapter 12 *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: insanity in early nineteenth century British India* pp245-267 in J Melling, B Forsythe (eds) *Insanity, Institutions and Society* 1999 London, Routledge

⁹⁶ **Parry Jones W LI** 1972 *The Trade in Lunacy: a study of private madhouses in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul. 43

⁹⁷ **Clarke** 1894 op cit p25

⁹⁸ Curiously the early nineteenth century Bayford Mews built directly behind Pembroke House and presumably used by the asylum are in part preserved as the rebuilt headquarters of the Mental

Dr George Rees' private madhouse had been open for several years when he advertised for custom in the East India Register and Army List in February 1819. Before January 1815 the patients were under the supervision of George Wallet, who left to become steward of Bethlem and happily distinguished himself in the Select Committee on the Regulation of Madhouses hearings of 1815 by blowing the whistle on the invisibility at Bethlem of the physician, Thomas Monro. "My avocations are so numerous that I may be out of the way when he comes: I hear that he has not been round the house but once these three months; he may have been there without my knowledge....". Pembroke House was identified as one of the best private madhouses, far superior in the opinion of the Select Committee to Whitmore House, Hoxton House or Bethnal Green Asylum. But Pembroke House was small, in 1819 licensed for 10 male and 9 female patients and catered for a rather more select clientele than the larger madhouses that took paupers.

In August 1818 Rees began to take employees of the East India Company domiciled in England who had become insane. He used this fairly recent arrangement in his advert, "the number is limited, the Patients are select, the advantages are considerable and the terms reasonable...three quarters of those already admitted have been restored to health and reason." Having made this declaration, it is perhaps not surprising that the declared cure rates submitted to the Commissioners broadly tallied with this figure over the next two decades.

The Company contract in 1819 provided a fee of £100 for first class and £40 for second class patients. A guinea or more per week was the going rate for private patients at that time so Rees' fees were quite competitive and apparently cheaper for the Company than maintaining patients at European owned asylums in India.⁹⁹

The patients arrived once a year when the troop ships returned from India. Four times a year the Company sent their Examining Physician to check up on conditions and to

Aftercare Association, a voluntary organisation providing day care and employment rehabilitation for former patients.

see how Rees was spending Company money. In 1838 Dr William Williams took over the Asylum from Rees.¹⁰⁰ He had experience running three smaller madhouses in the 1820's before taking on this large institution.

The Commissioners in Lunacy disapproved of the Company's arrangements on the usual grounds that public institutions were preferable to private because of the absence of the profit motive and advised the Company to use instead the Royal Military Asylum at Great Yarmouth¹⁰¹ and the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar. These two establishments were at the time more expensive and housed a large number of pauper inmates regarded by the Company as unsuitable companions for Company employees. The Company therefore resisted the Commissioners' advice and continued to use Pembroke House.

The majority of the several hundred patients admitted to Pembroke House were young males of Irish extraction. Seventy per cent were from the Company's army, which recruited mainly in Ireland; 80% were under 40, only 8% were female. Individual case reports reveal a predictably high rate of 'military diseases'—DTs, Intemperance, General Paralysis, fevers, bowel diseases, head injury from falls, shooting, blows, epilepsy; 15% had a history of "sunstroke".

Conditions at Pembroke House were essentially benign. The Lunacy Commissioners' periodic visitations never revealed anything untoward. The Commissioners' hawkish disapproval of the "for profit" asylums would surely have alighted quickly on any irregularities. Patients of both lower and higher social classes received ample supplies of food, wine, beer and tobacco. Patients occupied themselves in gardening, wood-chopping, bricklaying, housework, brush making and mat weaving. First class patients could avail themselves of a range of gentlemanly diversions—billiards, chess, music, dancing, skittles, walks, riding, theatre visits (presumably to the Mermaid

⁹⁹ Ernst W 1988 Asylums in Alien Places pp48-70 in W Bynum, R Porter, M Shepherd (eds) *The Anatomy of Madness: essays in the history of psychiatry* vol 3 *The Asylum and its Psychiatry* 1988 London Routledge

¹⁰⁰ Dr WD Williams Physician, Proprietor Pembroke House served as a Guardian of Hackney and Stoke Newington Union in 1845 (HA BG 9 Minutes of Meetings 1845)

¹⁰¹ The Royal Military Asylum at Great Yarmouth is now converted into posh flats.

amongst others) and had access to a range of newspapers and periodicals. Relatives and friends could if they wished pay for them to be sent away on convalescent seaside holidays.

Treatment for mental disorder seems to have comprised the usual mixture of purging, blood-letting and fashionable potions of a mild sort. Dr Williams, responding to inquiries by the Commissioners in 1846, gave a 'Conolly-like' response. He did not treat diseases, only patients. He put his faith mainly in comfort, good food, diversions and kindly treatment. He was adamantly opposed to the use of mechanical restraints and felt seclusion was useful only as an emergency safety measure.¹⁰² The policy of mechanical non-restraint was adopted early according to Ernst and lingered in the successor institution the Royal India Asylum later than in most asylums at the end of the 19th century.

Patients occasionally absconded; several made a run for it when the troop ship docked before asylum staff had chance to collect them; others got out of Pembroke House, to the consternation of Hackney Union, whose primary concern was that the Union would get landed with the bill for pauper lunatics at large who fetched up in their patch.¹⁰³

The Great Eastern Railway appropriated the site in 1870 by the usual compulsory purchase route and after much wrangling between the Company, the War Office (which had just built the new Netley Hospital), the Lunacy Commissioners and several private asylums, the contract for Company 'Indian' insane was transferred to the care of a former Pembroke House assistant Dr. Thomas Beath Christie, at a newly converted manor house in Ealing, henceforth called the Royal India Asylum Establishment, which finally closed in the 1890s.

¹⁰² **2nd Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1846 Appendix L Treatment of mania**

¹⁰³ **Letter from Clerk to Hackney and Stoke Newington Union to Pembroke House Asylum 17 February 1870 Case of Owen H, quoted in Ernst 1998 op cit from India Office Records PRO/ PERA**

APPENDIX C: Biographical Notes

Parish and Union Officials

Samuel Miller: Assistant Overseer, Holy Sepulchre Holborn 1830-36

The observant, witty and not unkindly assistant overseer in the large parish of the City division of Holy Sepulchre Holborn lived at 68 Wynyatt Street¹⁰⁴ in the parish of St James Clerkenwell and worked from an office in West Smithfield Workhouse. He had been in office five and a half years at a salary of £150 per annum when the Poor Law Commission conducted a survey of paid parish officers in 1834.¹⁰⁵

Holy Sepulchre was the second largest and richest within the City Corporation bounds. Only St Giles Cripplegate had a larger and more prosperous population. The vestry was proud of its record in managing the poor. The workhouse was well funded; in 1834 the inmates cost 3s 7d per head per week, more than double that of some of their neighbours. The Trustees of the Poor (called Guardians in this parish), repeatedly made clear their opposition to the proposed Poor Law Amendment Act through Miller's responses to the Commission inquiries. Miller and the Trustees harboured considerable resentment of the new centralised bureaucracy.¹⁰⁶

In December 1834 during one of their regular meetings, the Guardians were working their way methodically through some minutiae of Poor Law Commission instructions and came across a technical point on the maintenance of paupers pending removal to distant settlements which they could not understand.¹⁰⁷ Miller offered to pop down to Somerset house right there and then to ask Edwin Chadwick in person. He had met Chadwick when he gave evidence to the Poor Law Commission Inquiry in 1832.¹⁰⁸ Chadwick kept Miller waiting for two hours then sent an assistant out to tell Miller to

¹⁰⁴ Twenty or so 18th Century houses in Wynyatt Street are preserved in tact, a two storey brick terrace of cottages surrounded on all sides by oversized modernist buildings of City University and concrete Islington council blocks. Dated 1788, the houses have inevitably been tarted up by Islington trendies.

¹⁰⁵ **Letter Miller from St Sepulchre Holborn Parish Guardians to Poor Law Commission** 13 October 1834 L92. Ms3216

¹⁰⁶ **St Sepulchre Holborn Vestry Minutes of Meetings** 1834 July 15 L92. 3149 vol 7; **Guardians of the Poor Workhouse Committee minutes** 29 December 1834 L92 3242

¹⁰⁷ **St Sepulchre Guardians of the Poor Workhouse Committee minutes** 29 December 1834 L92 3242

put his questions in writing; he declined to see him. Miller's feelings about this apparently minor slight can be judged from the blow-by-blow account which appeared in the Trustees' minutes the following week.¹⁰⁹ Chadwick's response arrived a few days later, clarifying the rule but pointing out that the regulations were plain.¹¹⁰

When the next request for information arrived from the Commission six months later, Miller penned a long, defensive and rebellious letter to Chadwick.¹¹¹ On this occasion the Trustees asked Miller to have it checked by all the Trustees before sending.¹¹² Were they beginning to get anxious about being led by the nose by their sharp-minded employee? It was a letter that Miller must have later regretted and the Trustees too. "The Poor Law Amendment Act as I presume you must be aware has not been put into operation by us except in cases of bastardy and removal and its results are consequently inapplicable to the parish." There follows a long and detailed response to questions about outdoor relief expenditure, giving the following figures: Expenditure 1833-34 £1960, 7s 11d (final week £35, 2s 8d). Expenditure 1834-35 £2509, 9s 11d (final week £45, 18s 11d). This is followed by a whinge about not being informed of the rules: "I nor anyone else here appears to know further of your recommendatory letter of 8 November than what appeared in the public journals."

In conclusion and as an act of justice I have to state that the poor rates having been steadily and regularly reduced during the last few years to half the amount, the prompt attention to all cases of real distress, the improved method of keeping the accounts and the weekly information accorded the Board have established the general management of the Poor in this parish.

Holy Sepulchre Parish declined to join the proposed City of London Union.¹¹³ The vestry's first choice was to remain as a single parish and had hopes of maintaining the

¹⁰⁸ Miller's evidence quoted in Codd's Report, Appendix A, **Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1832**

¹⁰⁹ **St Sepulchre Trustees of the Poor** minutes 4 January 1835; a brief second account appears in Trustees correspondence book with the Poor Law Commission Ms 3216

¹¹⁰ **Letter from Chadwick, Poor Law Commission to Trustees 5 January 1835**. Ms 3216. There are two versions of this letter recorded, one in the Trustees' minutes, one in the correspondence book, slightly different in unimportant particulars.

¹¹¹ **Letter from Miller to Chadwick**, 19 June 1835 Ms 3216

¹¹² **St Sepulchre Trustees of the Poor** minutes June 1835

¹¹³ **Letter from the Vestry Clerk St Sepulchre Holborn to Poor Law Commission 19 April 1836** L92 3216 p39

existing Overseers of the Poor, a subcommittee of three Trustees/ Guardians. The Churchwardens and wider vestry do not seem to have involved themselves much in the debate between their own Trustees of the Poor and the Poor Law Commission throughout 1835 and 1836, began to get interested in 1837.

In mid 1837 the Vestrymen became concerned about an incorrect rating assessment from the Poor Law Commission. Sam Miller again decided to attend Edwin Chadwick in person himself. On this occasion 9 July 1837 Mr Chadwick kept Miller waiting for four hours.¹¹⁴ Chadwick did eventually see him, only to tell Miller that there was no need for him to attend personally “or apply to the Commissioners directly”. If there was an error, “it would be remedied”. Miller remarked to Chadwick that “having waited four hours I had been reading the Commissioners’ 2nd Report some information that the parish officers wanted. Mr Chadwick presented me with two of the reports, for the parish and one for myself”. Did humourless Chadwick recognise the dig? The Commission’s 2nd Report is largely a description of the extent of opposition to the Amendment Act.

Chadwick invited the Churchwardens to come and talk directly with the Chairman Mr Frankland Lewis the following Monday.¹¹⁵ This meeting appears to have soothed the Churchwardens’ feelings about the rating assessment. It is possible that this marked the point when the Commission’s influence over the Vestry changed the course of the local implementation of the Act.

In mid 1837 the Commission wrote to the Vestry in some frustration suggesting that the parish join with one or two other local parishes to form a union. The Vestry, disassociating itself quite suddenly from the views of their own Trustees and also those of Sam Miller, seem to have understood the implications of opposition to forming a union after the meeting with Frankland Lewis. They expressed a willingness to join a Union just one week later.¹¹⁶ In their letter to the Commission the Vestrymen also dropped Miller into deep trouble by pointing out that the figures in his letter of 19 June 1835 two years earlier were simply wrong, both in the amount of relief expended in the

¹¹⁴ Correspondence Book St Sepulchre Holborn 9 July 1837 L92 3216

¹¹⁵ Ibid 17 July 1837

two years '34 and '35 but also by refuting his claim that the poor rate had dropped by the claimed amount. The Vestry sent Miller round in person to tell Chadwick of his error—poor Miller. There seems little doubt that Miller's error was an over-enthusiastic, ill-judged attempt to persuade the Poor Law Commission of the wisdom of leaving the parish to manage their own poor affairs in the old way. In fact Miller's claims that the parish were keeping their poor relief budget under tight control and were reducing their out-relief, while not true for the period he was claiming, later became true for the years 1835 and 1836, when outdoor relief was reduced by a third, the total number poor relieved dropped and the overall budget was successfully controlled.¹¹⁷ From an average of 570 people relieved per day on average in 1833-34, the number fell to 370-380 or so per day in 1837-8.¹¹⁸

The Vestry finally declared its willingness to join a Union in November 1837.¹¹⁹ The Commission eagerly accepted their offer and the short-lived West London Union was formed in April 1838. Sam Miller's voice disappears from the parish records overnight on formation of the Union. He was paid for the last time on 28 March 1838 and was not employed by the new Union.¹²⁰

William Baker. Baker's entry in Boase says

Born 1784. An attorney in London; coroner for the East Division of Middlesex; author of a practical compendium of recent statutes, cases and decisions affecting the office of coroner 1851. d. 12 Chester Terrace, Regents Park 22 February 1859. Mentioned in cases up to 1854.

Referred to in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws as "Coroner and Vestry Clerk of St Anne's Limehouse",¹²¹ Baker was promoted to Clerk of the Stepney Union, of which Limehouse was a part, in 1836 at the age of 52. He was paid more than

¹¹⁶ Letter to Poor Law Commission from Vestry Ibid 23 July 1837 p48

¹¹⁷ Overseers of the Poor Account Books 1829-60 L92 3274; Receipts/payments book 1833-38 L92. 3244

¹¹⁸ Miller's weekly statements of number and class of poor relieved 1833-1838 L92. 3264

¹¹⁹ Letter from Churchwarden John Maguire to Poor Law Commission Ibid 4 November 1837

¹²⁰ Overseers of the Poor Account Books L92. 3274 p102

¹²¹ Checkland SG, Checkland EOA 1974 The Poor Law Report of 1834. London Pelican 224

any other Clerk in East London, £250 rising to £300 per annum because he also undertook legal work for the Union. The major part of his income however must have come from his part-time coronial post. Baker's role as Coroner is not referred to in the Stepney Union Board Minutes though there must have been occasions when his court would have investigated sudden deaths of paupers.

Impressive Baker was the most effective union clerk in East London. There is no mistaking the positive impact of his obsessively efficient style of benevolent administration. His prodigious written output and tireless determination to serve the Guardians' objectives seems all the more remarkable when combined with the office of coroner. He had the energy and style of a man half his age. He was described in the press as "Acting Coroner" until after his retirement from the Union in 1846. His coroners' duties covered the Eastern Metropolis; Thomas Wakley, the fiery radical editor of the *Lancet* covered the Western. Both regarded as campaigning populist coroners, they waged a successful joint campaign for statutory inquests on deaths in prisons but failed to achieve the same for deaths in workhouses.¹²²

Coroners were paid by fee per inquest and generally made a packet out of the job in London. "Baker's Trap", mentioned in chapter 6, the swivel bridge in Old Gravel Lane across Shadwell Basin, where 15 women drowned in the four years 1830-34, was so called because it trapped bodies and therefore fees for the Coroner.¹²³ When Polly Chapman drowned herself in the Docks in 1832, Baker, ever eager to discharge his duties according to the letter of the law, insisted on her body being sent to the London Hospital for dissection under the recent Anatomy Act, in spite of her friends raising over £3 for a funeral hoping to avoid such a consequence. The coroner thought it "was necessary to make an example" and hoped it would serve as a deterrent to other desperate young women. Richardson uses this incident to point to the retributive nature of dissection in the official mind.¹²⁴ Baker retired as Clerk to the Union at the end of

¹²² **Anderson O** 1987 *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Oxford Clarendon 24, 25 n45, 42, 48, 347 n9

¹²³ **The Times** 15 October 1834, 4b

¹²⁴ **Richardson R** 1988 *Death, Dissection and the Destitute Harmondsworth* Penguin 234-235

April 1946.¹²⁵ A letter of good wishes from Chadwick to Baker was recorded in Stepney Board Minutes.

The Guardians

Who were the men who comprised the Boards of Guardians of the poor? "Those whose attention and services are of little value" was Chadwick's dismissive opinion of the elected vestrymen who administered local government prior to the Metropolitan Management Act of 1855.¹²⁶ Chadwick's style of stewardship of the Poor Law Commission suggests that he took a similarly dismal view of the Guardians of the Poor. No doubt some were inactive bumbles, bunglers, make-weights and hangers-on but men do not donate hours of free time every week over several years to voluntary effort unless it fulfils some clear role in their lives. These men sustained their motivation over years; at least this is true of the more active Guardians. Attendance at Board meetings varied a good deal; in Stepney the meetings were well attended, in Poplar only a handful of men turned up regularly. Board minutes reflect the decisions of the keen ones, usually the dozen or so who were active, contributing to the subcommittees, undertaking visits to the institutions and writing reports.

Roebuck points out that few of the men involved in local government left a record of their reasons for being involved but it is not hard to fathom some of their motives.¹²⁷ Shopkeepers and traders with large freehold property were numerous among the Guardians. Shops carried a higher rating assessment than private houses, so there was a direct financial interest for their owners in keeping rates down by playing a part in the administration of the poor budget since the poor rate made up the bulk of the domestic and commercial rates. The result of fracturing this balancing incentive bond can be seen in the profligacy of the City of London Union where the Guardian JP's were not usually

¹²⁵ Letter from **Chadwick to Baker** on his resignation St BG/L/ ? 30 April 1846

¹²⁶ **J Roebuck** 1979 *Local Government and Society in Urban Development in 19th Century London*, Lambeth Battersea and Wandsworth 1838-1888. London Phillimore, Chapter IX, 152

¹²⁷ **Ibid** 152-4

local residents and could happily impose a high rate burden on the Union's constituent City parishes without feeling the pinch personally.¹²⁸

There were practical reasons too why the Guardians tended to be small businessmen. The Poor Law Commission dictated that regular board meetings must take place during normal working hours. Several unions would have preferred to meet in the evening at six o'clock to allow working men to attend more conveniently but the Commission insisted that the meetings must begin at four o'clock latest. This effectively ruled out all except men with control over their own working hours or those who could afford to employ others to 'mind the shop' while about Union business. Journeys to children's establishments, lunatic asylums and pauper farms regularly occupied a whole day. Members of important sub-committees gave considerable time out of the working week. Gentlemen, retired tradesmen and the more prosperous shopkeepers were the only ones available.

Roebuck suggests that local government office could be a source of personal advantage for tradesmen inasmuch as they might benefit from access to information about development plans and would be in a position to influence, for example the direction of new roads, sewers and water lines.¹²⁹ Roebuck found no evidence of subordination of public interest to private profit on the part of the open vestries in south London. The scramble for office that followed the 1855 Act however suggests that personal advancement, or the contemplation of the possibility of it, might well have played a part in the enthusiasm for office. The Guardians of the Poor on the other hand could not have perceived much personal gain to be had from office. Every year unions awarded a handful of large contracts for workhouse coal, provisions, bedding and clothing, building maintenance and bread for outdoor relief. Except in so far as former Guardians sometimes won tendered contracts, local tradesmen do not appear to have traded directly with the Union during their term of office.

¹²⁸ **Tanner A** 1995 Chapter 8 How Unique was the City of London Union? 292-330

¹²⁹ **Roebuck J** 1979 op cit Chapter 1 The Open Vestries

The 'shopocracy'¹³⁰ core of the Boards was enhanced by a classier cadre of 'gentlemen', far less numerous but often very important in determining the style and culture of a board. Frequently the chairman was a local resident gentleman, often a magistrate, and occasionally a freehold landlord with houses rented out to tenants in the locality but who was resident elsewhere. An interest in the rates may go some way to explaining their participation. If financial ~~concern~~^{concern} triggered their interest though, it does not fully explain the continuing commitment, which seems to have had its origin somewhere between a sense of community duty combined with a genuine belief in doing good for the poor and a wish to be 'someone' of standing locally. These motives are not mutually exclusive, of course. The enhancement of personal prestige with neighbours and friends, the simple if suspect pleasure afforded by having influence over the lives of others, however helpless and defeated the others might be, being a guardian made a man a respectable citizen. It showed the world that his community would elect him and he was trusted to spend local taxes wisely. County magistrates were *ex-officio* Guardians on the Board serving the parish where they lived but were not necessarily active members. When they were, it is common to find they were elected chairman, presumably because of their local status.

There was a further motive for joining the Guardians. Men like to belong to clubs. The clubbiness of the Boards may well have been a significant factor for some of the non-working guardians. When two of the St George in the East guardians set out on their weekly jaunt to Mr Drouet's in Tooting to see the children (carriage cost 3s 9d weekly, that is twice the cost of a place in the workhouse), do we suppose they drove straight there, inspected the children and drove straight back? Probably not. One imagines they paused for a bite of luncheon, exchanged east London gossip, laughed about that pompous Mr Mott or the impressive but inquisitive Mr Kay, considered whether the clerk was quite up to the workload and wondered when the expected report on fevers, or the police or sewers would be out. An addiction to public service lies in the corporate gossip, not in the corporate governance.

¹³⁰ 'Shopocracy' first referred to in **Poor Man's Guardian** 9 June 1832 p419, Oxford English Dictionary 1933 Oxford Clarendon Vol IX 737

Guardians were the elite of local government during the twenty years from 1834 to 1855 in the sense that they controlled large administrative areas and spent the most money of the multitude of local agencies. They had greater responsibility than the elected officers who served in Metropolitan London before 1855 on "the infinity of divisions, districts and areas....no fewer than 300 different bodies deriving powers from about 250 different local Acts"¹³¹ on Highways Boards, Sewer Commissions, Paving Commissions, parish vestries and a myriad of Turnpike Trusts.

The Unions in East London had strikingly diverse styles of administration. The balance of gentlemen and tradesmen could have affected the stance they adopted, the meaner, tighter unions perhaps dominated by absentee gentlemen, landlords with fewer personal connections with local families likely to fall within the remit of the guardians. An alternative hypothesis might be that the gentlemen landlords could afford to be more magnanimous, adopt a more lordly charitable stance than local small tradesmen, whose concern about the rates might be justified if a change in the rates could have a make or break effect on their businesses. But these notions are too simplistic. The corporate approach of individual boards was determined by a far more complex interplay of personality, politics and class. Outstanding individuals dominated some boards. Other boards seem to have been leaderless and rudderless. For much of this period, Hackney drifted and muddled through without any clear leadership. Stepney on the other hand had the good fortune to be served by several men of real quality and determination, of whom perhaps the most impressive was Robert Stephenson, a Wapping ship's provision merchant and biscuit manufacturer. His well-crafted reports are those of an educated man used to putting pen to paper but education and occupation seem to have been subordinate to character in shaping corporate culture, so nothing new there!

Hunting through the trades' directories, post office directories and court circulars of the period, most of the local tradesmen can be identified.¹³² Outside the inner London

¹³¹ **Times, Leader** 20 March 1855 quoted in **Young K, Garside P** 1982 *Metropolitan London, Politics and Urban Change 1837-1981* New York, Holmes and Meier, Chapter 2 Magnitude and Mist, 21

¹³² **Robson's Classification of Trades and Robson's Commercial Directories** 1821-1845. (Trade names for Guardians were identified in 1829 (9th ed'n) and 1840 (20th ed'n); **London's Commercial Directory** 1830 (9th Ed'n) (LCD); **Post Office Directory** Classification of trades 1836 (16th Ed'n) (POD); **London**

metropolitan area, the eastern suburban parishes of Middlesex, that is Hackney, Clapton and Stoke Newington, were listed in the Royal and National Directories.¹³³ Hackney unfortunately was not listed until the 1860's, but it is possible to identify some of the families with rare names who were still living in the area. These directories provide a couple of pages for each locality of 'prominent citizens' occupying local positions of influence and resident gentlemen, listed alongside the climate, soil type, the transport system and the general desirability for establishing residence. Some electoral polling lists, the 'Overseers Returns to the County', survive from local polling districts in Mile End and Bethnal Green, which between them covered most of East London. Unfortunately many are too fragile and yellowed to read properly and are incomplete but a handful of the non-resident landlords are listed, together with their usual residence.¹³⁴

Local resident magistrates were listed in the County List of Justices for the Peace. Only two lists survive from this period for Middlesex, those for 1842 and 1847.¹³⁵ Only six of the 17 with addresses in East London listed in either of those two years figure to any degree: J R Daniel Tyssen in Hackney, William Hurst Ashpitel, also from Hackney, George F Young in Stepney, William Howard from Bethnal Green, John Garford (Gayford?) and later John Stock in Poplar. The "fancy dressing and pantomime posturing" at the Eastern Middlesex magistrates court in St George in the East did little to inspire confidence in Charles Dickens.

[The magistrates] discuss the matter at issue in a state of mind betokening the weakest perplexity with all parties, concerned and unconcerned, and for a final expedient to consult the complainant as to what he thinks ought to be done with the defendant and take the defendant's opinion as to what he would recommend to be done with himself.¹³⁶

The names of guardians mentioned below were chosen because they were the most frequent attenders at meetings or played an active part in the narrative of Board minutes

Alphabetical and Commercial Directory 1838 (7th Ed'n) (LACD); **Pigot and Co's National Commercial and Street Directory of London 1840** (Pigot)

¹³³ **Royal and National Directories** (Home Counties Edition, Middlesex) 1863

¹³⁴ **Parish Polling Lists**, overseers' returns to the County, Mile End Old Town Polling District 1849 LMA: MR/PEO/1849/2/1,2

¹³⁵ **Middlesex Justices of the Peace Lists** August 1842, August 1847. LMA: MJP/L/15-22

¹³⁶ **Dickens C** 1860 All the Year Round 18 February reprinted in R Vallance (ed) 1966 Dickens' London. London, Folio Society, 159

in the early years. Since they were elected annually there was a turnover of names but the same men dominated the Boards for many years.

East London Guardians of the Poor, 1836-1843 (* denotes Chairman)

Hackney and Stoke Newington Union Boards of Guardians

R Ackroyd* gentleman, property in Nelson Terrace, Stoke Newington £36 rateable value.¹³⁷

G K Alexander gentleman, Summit Place, Upper Clapton. Later family notes exist in Hackney archive.¹³⁸

Thomas Appach Gentleman, Upper Clapton. Member and Collector of the Hackney Fund for the Relief of the Industrious Poor 1829.^{139 140}

William Hurst Ashpitel JP* (JP from 7.10.44) 28 Clapton Square. Surveyor, architect and Gentleman. Close business associate of Tyssen (see below). He or his son designed the parish church of St Barnabas, Homerton (1847).¹⁴¹ Even when not chairing or playing an active part in the Board of Guardians he was often referred to and his advice sought on property and building transactions. A member of several educational, philanthropic and ecclesiastical organisations, from 1825-8 one of the “drivers and viewers of wastes and commons of the manor of Hackney.”¹⁴² Entry in Boase:

b. 1776. Architect, pupil of Daniel Ashe Alexander, the architect of prisons Dartmoor and Maidstone. Assisted him in designs for the London Docks, a pupil of John Rennie....partner of James Savage, JP for Middlesex, designed first new church and extensive schools at South Hackney and many other buildings besides several large engineering works. Died Clapton Square 23 April 1853 aged 76.¹⁴³

William Balle High St North Stoke Newington, rateable value £42.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ **Royal and National Directories** 1863 op cit

¹³⁸ HAD ref ms D/F/BAX 48

¹³⁹ Thomas Warburton subscribed 5gns to Hackney Fund for Relief of the Industrious Poor in 1829

¹⁴⁰ **Royal and National Directories** 1863 op cit, HAD Charities file List of officers Hackney Fund for the Relief of the Industrious Poor 1840

¹⁴¹ Boase attributes design of St Barnabas, Homerton to WH Ashpitel's architect son Arthur, who became Vice-President of the RIBA in 1862.

¹⁴² **Tyssen Collection** HAD: D/F/TYS 16 Manorial Officers Lists

¹⁴³ **Boase F** 1892 *Modern English Biography*. London, Cass (modern ed'n 1962) Vol I: 96

¹⁴⁴ **Royal and National Directories** 1863 op cit

Captain Richard Berford Trustee and subscriber Hackney Church of England School (later Hackney Grammar), Trustee of the Hackney Friendly Institution.¹⁴⁵

J Boote Chatham Place, Hackney. Chymist and druggist? Subscriber to Hackney Parochial Schools, 1844 and 1849.¹⁴⁶

J Burton Gentleman. Founder member of the Hackney Benevolent Institution, 1829.¹⁴⁷

John Edward Clennell Mare St Hackney, freeholder of land and premises at 45 College St, Homerton. Trustee of Hackney Permanent Benefit Building Society in 1855.¹⁴⁸

William Dudley 22 Nelson Terrace Stoke Newington, rateable value £45. Widow Julia Ann Dudley lived at Coronation Place, Stoke Newington.¹⁴⁹

G East There was an East family at 103 Albion Rd Dalston in 1849.¹⁵⁰ James East, possibly a relative, was a builder at 48, Broughton Rd, Stoke Newington.¹⁵¹

John Humphreys West Springfield Upper Clapton. Gentleman. Son John, born 1814 became solicitor and parliamentary agent 1842-59 and Coroner for East Middlesex 1859 to his death was knighted 1881, died 1886.¹⁵²

T Maughan Rose Villas, Mare St. Had property £100 rateable value in Stamford Hill, an overseer of the poor under the Trustees.¹⁵³

Samuel Nelme* 3 London Terrace London Fields. Property in Church St Hackney and Grove Place Hackney, wife Sarah.¹⁵⁴

John Robert Daniel Tyssen JP Gentleman, 13 Clapton Square. Land owner, local historian, the Tyssens were Hackney's 'first family,' see below.

William Varty* There was a printer of this name in business with Edward Varty at 75 Camomile St and 47 Bishopsgate Street Within, from 1836-75.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁵ **Hackney Benevolent Institution** HAD Charities file List of Officers.

¹⁴⁶ **Royal and National Directories** 1866 op cit; HAD file on Hackney Parochial Schools

¹⁴⁷ **Hackney Benevolent Institution** HAD Charities file List of Officers

¹⁴⁸ **Hackney Permanent Benefit Building Society**. List of Officers 1855 HAD file

¹⁴⁹ **Royal and National Directories** 1866 op cit

¹⁵⁰ **Parish Polling Lists**, overseers' returns to the County, Mile End Old Town Polling District 1849 LMA: MR/PEO/1849/2/1,2

¹⁵¹ **Royal and National Directories** 1850 op cit Stoke Newington

¹⁵² **Boase F** 1892 op cit Vol I: 587

¹⁵³ **Parish Polling Lists**, Mile End 1849 op cit

¹⁵⁴ **Parish Polling Lists**, Mile End 1849 op cit; **Royal and National Directories** 1866 op cit

¹⁵⁵ **Todd W B** 1972 A Dictionary of Printers and Others in Allied Trades in London and Vicinity 1800-1840 London Printing Historical Society G L ref R926-955

The East London Boards differed quite markedly in their balance of gentlemen and tradesmen. Hackney and Stoke Newington Union was controlled by a handful of local resident gentlemen. Almost all the information about the Hackney Guardians recorded here comes from the priceless Tyssen collection of local historical documents, assembled by one of the guardians, JRD Tyssen. Church papers, manorial records, minutes of School Trustees and other local institutions, sermons preached, theatre bills, adverts, any old bit of paper was catalogued, filed, transcribed in a magnificent magpie jumble. Tyssen's massive collection, assembled as a local history archive in 1868¹⁵⁶ now forms the nucleus of Hackney Archive.

The Tyssen family was the most prominent family in Hackney from the late 17th century when they purchased the Shacklewell Manor and estates from the Rowe family.¹⁵⁷ JRD Tyssen was the third son of W G Daniel Tyssen JP who started life as WG Daniel and took the family name on marrying Amelia Tyssen. Tyssen was first and foremost a property developer, creating the villa suburb of Clapton with his close associate W H Ashpitel.¹⁵⁸

Perhaps regrettably, Tyssen took only a passing interest in the Board of Guardians. He was an infrequent attender. The interest that he and Ashpitel showed in finding land for the County Asylum, see footnote, might reflect rare liberal views over the siting of such an institution, or simply enthusiasm to get his hands on the capital receipt. The manorial lands were in Tyssen's ownership but produced only a poor return on investment while in use as common land.

¹⁵⁶ **Tyssen Collection** HAD: D/F/TYS 16 no 2

¹⁵⁷ **Rowe Family File** HAD.

¹⁵⁸ Several London landowners responded to the Middlesex County Justices' advertisement for land suitable for the construction of the proposed new County Lunatic Asylum in 1828. (LMA: Index file MA/A/J3/22-53). One was from Tyssen, offering land at Hackney Downs, which was "high, dry, open and airy, gravelly soil, an ancient spring of very fine water, capital drainage, good roads, cheerful and extensive views although retired, no home near or likely to be. It is Lammas Land, there is a right of commonage half the year...would be given up for the parish for a moderate sum." Ashpitel delivered this letter taking with him a letter of introduction from Tyssen indicating that Ashpitel could negotiate on his behalf. Tyssen's confidence in the parish's support for the idea was misplaced. There was opposition from 'a certain party' who would, Ashpitel thought, raise objections at a forthcoming parish meeting. Ashpitel wrote again, Tyssen having gone to stay at Maidstone, to say he and Tyssen would be prepared

While Tyssen and Ashpitel were not regular attenders, their interests, particularly Tyssen's, may well have influenced the way the Board was run. The Board's day to day work seems to have been steered by men Tyssen could be sure of, but probably men of lesser quality. The core of Hackney Guardians was made up of Tyssen's friends. They dominated the Trustees prior to the Amendment Act and they carved up most of the official appointments between themselves after it.

Hackney Magazine and Parish Reformer, a monthly periodical with radical leanings, published from 1832 to the late 1830's¹⁵⁹ was deeply suspicious of the closed style of local government controlled by a handful of men. Following the Amendment Act, a leading article urged local opposition to the appointment of the existing Trustees of the Poor as new Guardians.¹⁶⁰ In 1835 the editor had been persistently critical of Pulley the vestry clerk, on the grounds of his alleged incompetence and in 1836 accused him of improperly canvassing on behalf of the existing Trustees, that is Tyssen's place-men. In April 1836, the magazine mounted a campaign against the Trustees, pointing to their shilly-shallying lack of consistency as the heart of the problem.

The management of this parish is based on no uniform and intelligible rule. Two years ago in deciding on the award of the various tenders for printing, the Trustees were guided by a plan and just principle, last year they adopted a different principle, and this year they disregard both principles and are guided by no principle at all. There is no accounting for the whims of *great* men.¹⁶¹

A touch of sour grapes perhaps in this printer's outburst but the style of administration described in this passage certainly accords with that reflected in the minutes.

Tyssen convened a private meeting of his trusted cronies among the Trustees on 26 January 1837 at the Mermaid Tavern, the usual meeting place, to decide which of them would be supported for election to the new Board of Guardians.¹⁶² They decided on Norris, Tyssen, Gibson, Penlington, Ashpitel, La Serre, Boote, Clennell, Varty, Adam,

to seek a local Act of Parliament to have the commonage land rights revoked. There the correspondence ends (Letter from Ashpitel to Sibley 4 February 1828 LMA: MA/A/J3/22-53)

¹⁵⁹ *Hackney Magazine and Parish Reformer* HAD: 904 Y4304-Y4309

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid* III January 1837 p47

¹⁶¹ *Ibid* III April 1836 p89

Holmden, Smallfield and Appach. A rival public meeting at the Dolphin was called by an unnamed critic, where an alternative list of nominees was drawn up: Ashpitel, Boote, Buck, Clennell, Dennis, Humphreys, Long, Rainsdale, Smallfield, Tyssen, Varty, Webb. Both lists contained the five gentlemen with their fingers in every Hackney pie—Tyssen, Ashpitel, Varty, Clennell and Boote. Out of 2820 local men qualified to vote, only 1211 did. The only advertisement was a small notice in *The Times*.¹⁶³ Tyssen's 'Mermaid' list was adopted and duly elected but it would not have made much difference if the 'Dolphin' list had been chosen instead. Most of the men on both lists served as Guardians at some time in the next decade.

The Hackney Guardians were established church to a man, as everywhere else in East London. None of their names appear in the lists of elders, committees and subscribers to the numerous dissenting churches. Quakers, Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists had all found a welcome in Hackney but none were Guardians. The established church still lay at the heart of local government. Ashpitel, Nelme, Tyssen and Varty were active in the movement to establish more Church of England churches locally, attended meetings in 1839 "for the proposal for the erection and endowment of new churches in Hackney" and formed the Committee to commission the Hackney New Church Building Act.¹⁶⁴

Several of the Guardians served on local school committees or donated monies regularly. Tyssen, Appach, Burton and Humphreys subscribed to the Upper Clapton and Stamford Hill in 1834, Sam Nelme was 'auditor' of Hackney Church of England School in 1847, William Varty in 1849. The Clarks subscribed in 1844 and 1849 and Boote was a generous subscriber in 1849.¹⁶⁵ ¹⁶⁶ The school's Ladies' Committee seems to have been the entire singing class mentioned below.

The Hackney Savings Bank numbered William Varty and one of the local parish doctors, Thomas Hovell, on the management committee in 1829. Hackney Benevolent

¹⁶² *Ibid* III May 1837 p146

¹⁶³ *Ibid* III p150

¹⁶⁴ *Tyssen Collection* HAD: D/F/TYS 16 no 2 Ecclesiastical Papers and Miscellaneous X387

¹⁶⁵ *Act to Acquire Land for the Commercial Railway 1836 Deeds of Acquisition* THA: L1779, 5636

Friendly Institution, formed in 1843, included Berford, Ashpitel, Tyssen and Varty as Trustees. Burton, Nelme and Varty as arbitrators and Nelme again as auditor.

The families that made up Hackney 'society' between them ran most of the key social and financial institutions. There is a charming narrative poem from the 1830's probably written for a daughter as an affectionate tease by an anonymous local gentleman, which mentions the daughters of several of the Guardians.¹⁶⁷ It is a rather lengthy narrative poem so only relevant excerpts are reproduced below:

**Lines written on discovering that the ladies of
Hackney had given up their singing class**

Oh, where are the Syrens who twice a week went
To the Charity Schools upon singing intent?
The birds which in cages in Chatham Place hang
Since the ladies began from sheer envy ne'er sang
But 'tis gone and I went though the sun was so hot
On last Tuesday at twelve but alas they were not

I ought first to name the committee, I ween,
Misses Ashpitel, Hoskins, M. Varty, Levin
Not forgetting Miss Torkington, she too is there
As Treasurer filling the President's chair.

Two Ashpitels next and a number quite rare,
There are four who rejoice in the name of La Serre
Side by side Miss Aubert and Miss Berger¹⁶⁸ are seen
And Miss Henrietta and Ellen Levin etc., etc.....

The ladies of Hackney sang, interested themselves in the local school, visited the sick and each other. Their husbands and fathers meanwhile dined together at the Mermaid, looked after their business interests but had time to indulge in a spot of local philanthropy and keep an eye on the rates. As late as 1857, when a committee was

¹⁶⁶ Dr John Warburton was a subscriber to the school in 1842.

¹⁶⁷ Tyssen Collection HAD: LH 824

¹⁶⁸ Miss Berger was the daughter of the proprietor of Berger's Paint Factory, founded 1773, which survived until the mid-20th century. (Watson I 1990 op cit 115)

formed to raise funds for repairing the bells and clock in Hackney old tower¹⁶⁹, the names listed are Ashpitel, Burton, Clennell and Tyssen.¹⁷⁰

It is as interesting to note what the Hackney Guardians did not participate in as what they did. They did not subscribe to the Hackney Society for Teaching Adults to Read.¹⁷¹ Only Thomas Appach contributed to the Hackney Fund for Relief of the Industrious Poor.¹⁷²¹⁷³ None of the Guardians were members of St John's Philanthropic Society "formed by a few tradesmen for the purpose of distributing bread, coals and groceries to the deserving poor during the Winter season", which met at the Cock Tavern. Only Mr Ashpitel donated monies for the new Infant Orphan Asylum in the 1850's, an institution based in Hackney but serving the Metropolis that attracted donations from numerous titled and wealthy Londoners a cut above the Hackney Guardians.

Politically conservative, unimaginative and only modestly competent, Hackney and Stoke Newington Union Guardians are an unimpressive brigade of suburban plodders. The influential people were usually elsewhere, looking after their businesses; those that were left to 'run the show' never really got to grips with the job.

Stepney Union Board of Guardians

Thomas William Barnett, surgeon, Fore Street Limehouse.¹⁷⁴

Thomas Brushfield * Entry in Boase.¹⁷⁵

second son of George Brushfield of Ashford in the Water, Derbyshire, where born 16 Feb 1798. Oil and colour shop at 28 Union Street 1821-55. Played under an assumed name at City of London Theatre 1827. Chairman of Board of Guardians 1839-48. Member for Whitechapel of Metropolitan Board of Works 1865-death. Contributed many papers to the Reliquary, quarterly archaeological journal and review 1861-death, died 5 Church Street Spitalfields, 1 Sept 1875. Obit Reliquary xvi 209-16 1876.

¹⁶⁹ The Old Tower is now the symbol for Hackney Borough's logo.

¹⁷⁰ **Ibid** Ecclesiastical Papers and Misc. X387

¹⁷¹ **Ibid** Ecclesiastical Papers and Misc. X387

¹⁷² **Ibid.**

¹⁷³ Thomas Warburton gave 5gn.

¹⁷⁴ **POD** 1836 op cit

¹⁷⁵ **Boase F** 1892 (modern ed'n 1962) op cit Vol I: 455

Owned 4 houses in Union Terrace, Limehouse. Poor rate collector for Trustees of the Poor. There is now a Brushfield Street in Spitalfields in the area once known as the Old Nichol.

Edward Edmund Child Pawnbroker, 217 High Street Shadwell.¹⁷⁶

William Dobinson* Linen draper, High St, Shadwell, later in 1860's lived in Stoke Newington.¹⁷⁷

William Fishers, Fishers and Harland, painters.¹⁷⁸

Robert Gamman Coal merchant, 7 Wilmot Square and Wapping Wall.¹⁷⁹

John Goodwin, of Goodwins, coopers in Shadwell?¹⁸⁰

John Kirkcaldy Plumber, 217 High St, Wapping¹⁸¹

John Lilley, Mathematical instrument maker, Commercial Road. Lilley was both a trustee and a subscriber to Bishopsgate Charity Schools, later the Central Foundation School for Girls, between 1826 and 1835.¹⁸² He was appointed as a 'steward' of the school in 1836.

William John Livingston* Sailmaker, ships' chandler 79 Fore Street, Limehouse, died 1847.¹⁸³

Charles Rich Nelson Gentleman, lived Twickenham. Freeholder of butchers' shop in Oak Lane¹⁸⁴

Thomas Ratcliff Baker, 34 Brook Street, Ratcliff and of Maudlin Rents.¹⁸⁵

Thomas Single Builder, White Horse Lane¹⁸⁶

Samuel Stephenson Scott and Stephenson, Provision merchants¹⁸⁷

Robert Stephenson Provision merchant and biscuit manufacturer, High St Wapping.¹⁸⁸

Henry Vane 1788-1849 Shipchandler, Limehouse. Lived 5 York Square, owner 2 other freeholds.¹⁸⁹ Son was Sir Henry Vane, Secretary to the Charity Commission in 1853.

¹⁷⁶ Robson's 1829 op cit

¹⁷⁷ Robson's 1840 op cit

¹⁷⁸ Pigot 1840 op cit

¹⁷⁹ Robson's 1840 op cit

¹⁸⁰ LACD 1838 op cit

¹⁸¹ LCD 1830 op cit

¹⁸² Minute Book of the Trustees and subscribers **Central Foundation School for Girls** 1826-1835 THA: No 1/ CFS/A/1/1/4

¹⁸³ Pigot 1840 op cit

¹⁸⁴ Parish Polling Lists, Mile End 1849 op cit

¹⁸⁵ Robson's 1829 op cit

¹⁸⁶ Robson's 1840 op cit

¹⁸⁷ Pigot 1840 op cit

George Frederick Young JP* (from 5.11.35). Born London. Lived 80 Cornhill and Northbank, Walthamstow, Essex. Married Mary, youngest daughter of John Abbot of Canterbury, Later Deputy Lieutenant of the Tower, died 23 Feb 1870.¹⁹⁰ Churchwarden, Limehouse parish. A 'collector' and probably an initiator of the Limehouse Provident Institution for Savings, later the Limehouse Savings Bank.¹⁹¹ Young was a highly successful shipbuilder in Limehouse East India Docks. The company Cox and Curling, later Curling and Young, established 1805, specialists in East Indiamen built the *Iberia* in 1837. They became steamship builders, (the *Vivid* and the *Wilberforce*) and in 1838 built the finest passenger and mail ship of its day, the *Victoria* for The British American Steam Navigation Co. By 1855 the company was called Young and Co, a year later Young and Magnay. They built several gunboats for the Crimean War.¹⁹² On 5 October 1827 Young bought an eighth share in the ship *Endymion* at Bristol.¹⁹³ Entry in Boase.¹⁹⁴

Eldest son of Vice-Admiral William Young, b London 23 October 1791; a ship owner and merchant in the City of London. Chairman general ship owners' society; MP for Tynemouth 1832-1838, unseated on petition. MP for Scarborough 1851-52. Contested Scarborough 1852, defeated. Died 23 February 1870. Obituary in Illustrated London News lvi 283 1870.¹⁹⁵

In *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*.¹⁹⁶ "In favour of protection to agriculture, opposed to the repeal of the navigation law and in favour of short parliaments."

Stepney was the most impressive of the East London Unions in its dedication to implementing the Poor Law in a fair and just way. Law-abiding, compliant with Commission guidance, the Guardians never lost sight of their responsibilities to

¹⁸⁸ **Pigot** 1840 op cit

¹⁸⁹ **LACD** 1838 op cit; **Parish Polling Lists**, Mile End 1849 op cit; **Boase F** 1892 op cit Vol III: 1400; **Times** 23 April 1866, 4

¹⁹⁰ **Stenton M** 1976 *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament Vol 1 1832-1888* Sussex Harvester

¹⁹¹ **Limehouse Provident Institution for Savings** Subscribers Book THA: Ms Stepney 596,149,111.

¹⁹² **Banbury P** Shipbuilders of the Thames and Medway 1978 Newton Abbot David and Charles, 162-163

¹⁹³ **Endymion Purchase Agreement** 1827 LMA: Q/SHR/142

¹⁹⁴ **Boase F** 1892 op cit Vol III: 1573

¹⁹⁵ Young's Obituary, **Illustrated London News** lvi 283, 1870.

¹⁹⁶ **Stenton M** 1976 op cit

administer poor relief in a humane but innovative way. The dominant characters were businessmen, not the local prosperous shop-keeper type but seriously effective merchants, manufacturers and traders, a second generation of men whose fathers had made their wealth out of the London docks, educated and articulate. Men like Young, who chaired the Guardians for some years, one of the best known shipbuilders in the country and the two Stephensons had businesses that were manufacturing concerns as well as provision suppliers to the docks. Robert Stephenson, chair of the visiting committee, was a biscuit manufacturer, (this probably refers to ship's biscuits, a staple storage food for crews). William Livingston, chairman of the Board for a year or two, had a sail-making business and general ships' chandlery. Henry Vane was another ships' Chandler who owned several other freehold properties, whose son went on to achieve some distinction as secretary to the Charity Commission. Thomas Brushfield, who chaired the Guardians for some years and seems to have been an influential participant at Board meetings, had a thriving dockland business but was evidently a keen archaeologist in his spare time and even it seems an amateur actor. John Lilley was a mathematical instrument maker who took an interest in the establishment of the Central Foundation School for local girls, again an educated man a cut above the average local trader.

Other Stepney Guardians were local shopkeepers or small traders serving the dockland area; a coal merchant, a plumber, a baker, a builder, a pawnbroker but it is the middle-class businessmen who set the tone. One of the hardest workers though was Thomas Ratcliff, of Ratcliff parish, a baker whose family was presumably long established in the area. Where Stephenson led, Ratcliff was usually close behind as a member of his team. Charles Rich Nelson, who owned the freehold of a butcher's shop, seems to have lived in Twickenham. Why did he continue as a Guardian? The Rich and Nelson families were linked through neighbouring properties and presumably also by marriage.

Summing up, many of the Stepney Guardians were educated, prosperous, ambitious and successful. Their motives for standing as Guardians of the Poor may have more to do with a sense of social responsibility, a wish to belong to 'the great and the good', than to keeping the rates down. Although they must have been major contributors to the poor

rates, they could probably afford to be generous without much personal financial pain. They invested the rates in new buildings for the Union, were as keen on education and religious observance as Kay and did their duty. In short they were a fine bunch of Victorians!

Bethnal Green Board of Guardians

Mr Atkins Surveyor, valuer and appraiser, 9 Clarence Place, Hackney Road.¹⁹⁷

Mr G Morris Baker 154 Church Street, Bethnal Green, owned 18&19 Cross Street.¹⁹⁸

David Batchelor Printer, 14 The Crescent, Bethnal Green, member of a family of master printers (sometimes Batchelar) including Thomas, who had premises at this address from 1828-32 and Daniel, 1836-42. Previous addresses in Shoreditch and Moorfields.¹⁹⁹

Mr Graves untraced

Nathaniel Hardingham House agent, Paradise Row. Owned numerous properties in Cross Street, Green Street and others. A major landlord.²⁰⁰

J Howard Carpenter, 97 Church Street²⁰¹

William Howard JP* 7, Newmarket Terrace, Cambridge Heath. Owner of 2 other freeholds, one in Little Union St cleared to make way for the Commercial Railway in 1836.²⁰²

J Kelday Pawnbroker, 10 Durham Place East, Hackney Rd, lived in Blackfriars in 1849, owned property and land on which NE London Cemetery built.²⁰³

Mr Lantois untraced

J Marshall Cheesemonger 28 Church Street, Bethnal Green.²⁰⁴

Mr Rayner Builder/ corn dealer/ surgeon ?²⁰⁵

Mr Tanner plumber ? tobacconist ? Lived 9 Pollard Row.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁷ LACD 1838 op cit

¹⁹⁸ Parish Polling Lists, Mile End 1849 op cit

¹⁹⁹ Todd WB 1972 op cit

²⁰⁰ Parish Polling Lists, Mile End 1849 op cit ; LACD 1838 op cit

²⁰¹ POD 1836 op cit

²⁰² Middlesex County List of Justices 1842 op cit; Watson I 1990 Hackney and Stoke Newington Past. London, Historical Publications, 91-92

²⁰³ LACD 1838 op cit; North East London Cemetery Land Deed 1849 THA

²⁰⁴ POD 1836 op cit

J Tilly Bricklayer, Edward Street, Bethnal Green.²⁰⁷

Charles Unwin Grocer, Bethnal Green Road.²⁰⁸

Charles Vandersteen House Agent, Builder, 95 Bethnal Green Road.²⁰⁹

The mean-minded men of Bethnal Green had the usual sprinkling of small tradesmen; carpenter, pawnbroker (a very prosperous one who later took a shop in Blackfriars), cheesemonger, bricklayer. No less than five though were actively engaged in the housing and property development boom which was changing Bethnal Green rapidly from a pleasant semi-rural suburb to one of the unhealthiest places in London. The quality of the myriad one-storey terrace houses was notoriously bad. One of the Guardians, Nathaniel Hardingham, was a house agent who rented out huge numbers of houses in Bethnal Green, another was a local landowning JP, William Howard. It is possible that both these men fell into the category of despised profiteers. Howard made a packet out of selling some of his property in 1836 to the new Commercial Railway.²¹⁰ The Guardians under his chairmanship struck the strange deal with the same Railway Company to build a bridge right across the end of their workhouse and through Hardingham's garden, see chapter 5; nineteenth century sleaze?

Whitechapel Union Board of Guardians

Charles Bratt * Commissioner for Paving, Bethnal Green, died 1862. Obituary in *The Annual Monitor* 1864, p6. Owner of property in Edmonton.²¹¹

Charles Collins untraced

Thomas Craven* Nelson Street, Whitechapel.²¹²

Thomas Fisher untraced

Samuel Hart Pen manufacturer, 4 Duke Street, Aldgate.²¹³

William Hems Hems and Son, Cutlers, Ironmongers, 39&42 High St Whitechapel.²¹⁴

²⁰⁵ **POD** 1836 op cit; **Robson's** 1840 op cit

²⁰⁶ **Robson's** 1840 op cit

²⁰⁷ **POD** 1836 op cit

²⁰⁸ **POD** 1836 op cit

²⁰⁹ **LACD** 1838 op cit

²¹⁰ **Act to Acquire Land for the Commercial Railway**, op cit THA

²¹¹ **Personal Name Index** THA refers to Bratt's obituary but the *Annual Monitor* for 1864 is not available in BL, BNL or THA

²¹² **Polling Lists** Mile End 1849 op cit

Daniel Hodson Silk machine maker, 27 Gun St, Spitalfields.²¹⁵

John Holliday Tailor and draper, 41 Whitechapel Road.²¹⁶

James Thomas Ilsley Tyre smith, 101 High St, Whitechapel.²¹⁷

William Ireson untraced

Edward James untraced

Thomas Lulham Tailor and draper, 213 Whitechapel Road.²¹⁸

Marmaduke Matthews Timber merchant, 7 Church Street, Mile End.²¹⁹ There was also a Marmaduke Matthews, possibly the same man or a relative, who became a property speculator in the East End and South Hackney in the 1840-60 period.²²⁰ He lived at Cambridge Heath, Bethnal Green.

William Monk Stuff smelter and horse slaughterer, Little North Street, leased out property in Whitechapel Road.²²¹

John A Perry, Ironmonger, 109 High Street, Whitechapel.²²²

Charles Rich untraced, may be related to Charles Rich Nelson, Stepney guardian.

Thomas Robinson Silk manufacturer, Fore Street, Spitalfields.²²³

James Schooling Wholesale furnishing ironmongers, 14 Great Garden Street, Whitechapel.²²⁴

George Sparks, untraced, possibly a builder, Tower Hill.²²⁵

Joshua Taylor Cabinet maker, 42 Haydon Square, Minories.²²⁶

John Turner Potato salesman, 3 South Street, Spitalfields.²²⁷

George Harkins Wallis Livery stables, Whitechapel Road.²²⁸

²¹³ LACD 1838 op cit

²¹⁴ LACD 1838 op cit

²¹⁵ Robson's 1840 op cit

²¹⁶ LACD 1838 op cit

²¹⁷ Pigot 1840 op cit

²¹⁸ LACD 1838 op cit

²¹⁹ LACD 1838 op cit

²²⁰ Watson I 1989 Gentlemen in the Building Line: the development of South Hackney. London Padfield 54-55

²²¹ LACD 1838 op cit

²²² LACD 1838 op cit

²²³ LACD 1838 op cit

²²⁴ Pigot 1840 op cit

²²⁵ POD 1840 op cit

²²⁶ LACD 1838 op cit

²²⁷ POD 1840 op cit

²²⁸ POD 1840 op cit

Whitechapel Union was made up of an assortment of local small traders and shopkeepers. Thomas Craven and Charles Bratt were influential but remain untraced. Craven was a regular participant and chairman, Bratt was keen to stop most spending and always voted to sack people in trouble at disciplinary hearings. There is a flavour of bad-tempered miserliness about the resolutions he put which is thoroughly dislikeable.

Poplar Union Board of Guardians

James Brand Builder, Bromley by Bow.²²⁹

Thomas Brooke untraced

John Carter Auctioneer, 53 High Street, Poplar.²³⁰

George Crawley Pawnbroker, Bow.²³¹

Leonard Currie, Currie Malt Distillers, Bromley by Bow.²³²

W Drew untraced

John Fuller Shipwright, Millwall, Poplar.²³³

Thomas Garratt untraced

John Gayford JP* There is reference in the magistrates list to John Garford JP but not Gayford.²³⁴ The name is very clearly spelt in the minutes but it seems likely that it was the same man.

Henry Green Grocer, tea dealer, Shadwell.²³⁵

Thomas Hedges untraced

Anthony Hudson Grocer, Bow, second shop in Stratford le Bow.²³⁶

William Kerbey Oil and Colourman in Leman Street, Goodman's Fields, lived Monastery Cottage East India Road. A trustee of St Anne and Poplar Charity Schools in 1829 and 1831.²³⁷ Owned land in Grundy Street.

Simon Knight untraced

²²⁹ **Pigot** 1840 op cit

²³⁰ **Robson's** 1829 op cit

²³¹ **Robson's** 1840 op cit

²³² **Pigot** 1840 op cit

²³³ **POD** 1840 op cit

²³⁴ **Gayford, J** listed Middlesex County List of JPs 1842

²³⁵ **Pigot** 1840 op cit

²³⁶ **Robson's** 1829 op cit

²³⁷ **Poplar and Blackwall Schools** Minutes of Meetings 1804-1831 THA: J/PPN/1

William Man Boase²³⁸ identifies a William Man born in London 1818, son of William Man, who was an explorer/ traveller and FRGS. Possibly the son of this guardian.

John Otley untraced

William Pilcher untraced

Isaac Ratford, Gardener, Bow.²³⁹

William Simons Jnr. William Simons Snr was a plasterer and builder of Westminster and East India Road.²⁴⁰

John Spicer West Cottage, Coborn Road, died 1852²⁴¹

John Stock JP, member of Middlesex County Justices Asylum Committee in 1841, replacing John Garford.²⁴² Lived in Poplar.

James William Thompson Timber dealer, High Street, Poplar.²⁴³ Colleague of William Kerbey as Trustee of St Anne and Poplar Charity Schools.²⁴⁴

Gayford is a crucial figure in Poplar and is probably the same person as John Garford JP, who lived in the East India Dock Road, Poplar and was on the Middlesex Magistrates' Asylum Committee in 1840, 43 and 44, replaced by John Stock in 1841 and 42. Although his name is clearly written with a 'y' in the Poplar minutes, there is no reference in the Magistrates' lists to the name Gayford. There is nothing special about this bunch of local tradesmen to explain the punitive, humourless grimness of the Poplar Guardians.

St George in the East Board of Guardians

Daniel Callard 63 Ratcliff Highway, Baker.²⁴⁵

John Chatwood churchwarden 1838. Chemist and druggist, 95 Old Gravel Lane, Wapping.²⁴⁶ In 1850, a governor of Raine's School Foundation, see below.

Charles Fowler Pottery warehouse, 43 Shadwell Lane.²⁴⁷

²³⁸ **Boase F** 1892 op cit Vol II: 714; son's obituary in Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society 1881 iii p567

²³⁹ **POD** 1840 op cit

²⁴⁰ **POD** 1840 op cit

²⁴¹ **Personal Name Index** THA Reference to Will 1852

²⁴² **Stock, J** listed Middlesex County List of JPs 1842

²⁴³ **Robson's** 1829 op cit

²⁴⁴ **POD** 1840 op cit; **Poplar and Blackwall Schools** Minutes of Meetings 1804-1831 THA: J/PPN/1

²⁴⁵ **Pigot** 1840 op cit

George Gibson* Auctioneer and Appraiser, 53 Ratcliff Highway.²⁴⁸

Mr Groves untraced

Robert Hastie Corn and flour merchant in Wapping, Pavement Commissioner, St George in the East.²⁴⁹

Mr Lander untraced

Thomas Liquorish Proprietor of the Ship public house, Anthony Street, St George in the East.²⁵⁰ Churchwarden 1844-48.

Mr Mair untraced

James Massingham* Confectioner, 171 Ratcliff Highway, churchwarden in 1829. In 1850, was a governor of Raine's Schools Foundation, see below.²⁵¹

Peter Rayner* Paving Commissioner Bethnal Green, churchwarden St George in the East 1839-40.²⁵²

Thomas Richardson Brass founder, manufacturer, gas fitter and laquerer, 21 New Road, St George in the East.²⁵³

Mr Sandler Governor of Raine's Schools Foundation 1850.²⁵⁴

Thomas Simpson Churchwarden 1833-34, otherwise untraced.

Benjamin F Skelton Builder, Anthony Street, St George in the East.²⁵⁵ Churchwarden 1840-41.

Since the Clerk to St George in the East Guardians rarely included first names or initials in his lists of guardians elected and those who attended meetings, unlike Mr Baker in Stepney who also listed their occupations on some occasions, many are difficult to identify. In St George they were just 'Mr' except the chairmen. The more obvious 'movers and shakers' on the Board, the chairmen Massingham, Gibson and Rayner are tantalisingly invisible. More of these Guardians were churchwardens than in other

²⁴⁶ Robson's 1840 op cit; Raine's School Foundation Archive LMA: Acc 1811/1/4

²⁴⁷ POD 1840 op cit

²⁴⁸ POD 1840 op cit

²⁴⁹ POD 1840 op cit

²⁵⁰ LACD 1838 op cit

²⁵¹ POD 1840 op cit; Raine's School Foundation Archive LMA: Acc 1811/1/4

²⁵² Personal Name Index THA (Rayner)

²⁵³ LACD 1838 op cit

²⁵⁴ Raine's School Foundation Archive LMA: Acc 1811/1/4

²⁵⁵ LACD 1838 op cit

parishes and several served on one of the six tiny and famously inefficient local Paving Commissions that operated in this one parish.

There was a major dispute about 'popish' practices in the Church at St George's, which began in the late 1850's when Charles Lowder, a keen advocate of the High Church Ritualist Movement, a development of the Oxford Movement and Tractarianism, set up a mission in the parish. The dispute was largely about incense, swinging lights and garish vestments,²⁵⁶ but there is no reference in the material from this period in the local archive to any of the Guardians listed above.²⁵⁷

Massingham, the inaugural chairman, was a "confectioner". Raw sugar was one of the largest imports into the East India Docks from the West Indies. Huge brown 'mats' of sugar were hauled on carts up the stone tram lines along the new Commercial Road (constructed 1830) to sugar bakeries in and around Leman Street and Back Church Lane.²⁵⁸ The brick bakeries, primitive refineries, were 4 to 5 storeys high. Conditions in the boiling houses were so dreadful even the poor Irish from Rosemary Lane would not work in them and they depended on German labourers who were even cheaper to employ, being the poorest immigrants. Bare-chested men dripping with encrusted sugar worked 12 hours a day in the hot, nauseating stench of molten sweetness, a thick black crust on the floors and walls, 'icles' of glistening crystalline deposits hanging from the ceiling. Most of the bakeries were producing loaf-sugar but there were specialist manufacturers producing confectionery of all descriptions.²⁵⁹ ²⁶⁰ This is probably the sort of confectionery that Massingham owned.

The docks were the source of the guardians' wealth and of the poor rate monies they administered. St George in the East recognised in the first decade of the 19th century that the London Docks was a potentially major contributor to the poor rate coffers and

²⁵⁶ **Ellsworth L E** 1982 Charles Lowder and the Ritualist Movement. London, Darton Longman and Todd
THA: LC 100 LOW

²⁵⁷ **Dinsdale HC** 1901 Sixty Years of an East End Parish. London Bailey THA Acc No: L1798.221.4;
Hadden RH 1880 An East End Chronicle. London Hatchards

²⁵⁸ **Rose M** 1951 The East End of London, London Cresset, Chapter V The Great Expansion, 139

²⁵⁹ There is a sketch by Joseph Pennell of an old Victorian East End confectioner's factory in **Besant W** 1903 East London. London, Chatto and Windus, Illustration 31.

²⁶⁰ **Besant W** 1903 East London. London, Chatto and Windus, Illustration 31

tried to impose a rate of 5 shillings in the pound. The outraged Dock owners brought a high court action to challenge the legality of such an exceptional charge and won a reduction to half that amount.²⁶¹ Nevertheless the Docks were St George's 'cash cow' for the next 50 years, which in part may explain the Guardians' 'freestyle' spending policies.

Three of the Guardians listed above, Massingham, Sandler and Chatwood were governors of Raine's Schools Foundation, founded by a wealthy brewer in 1719, by the early 1800's providing education for 50 girls and 50 boys at a site in Charles Street off Old Gravel Lane.²⁶² A new building was put up in 1820 and alongside, a building for the St George's National School. In the late 1850's the Foundation was accused of squandering its investments and the Governors were obliged to publish a pamphlet defending themselves against the "calumnious slander".²⁶³ Unfortunately the Governors accused of mismanagement were not named.

Perhaps it was the St George in the East Guardians that Kay was thinking of when he complained that members of many London Boards of Guardians were "Pickwickians" from the old parochial vestry. The vestrymen he said needed "re-education. This is a most difficult task!"²⁶⁴ The Guardians were forcibly re-educated into making economies by the catastrophic dockland recession of the 1860s and then adopted the New Poor Law philosophy with greater enthusiasm.²⁶⁵

Doctors

Samuel Byles Listed in the London Medical Directory 1845 as a general practitioner at 3 Prospect Place, Mile End Road and 15 Union Street, Spitalfields with a partner, Hart.²⁶⁶ Qualified MRCSE 1843, LSA 1821. Surgeon to Bancroft's Hospital Mile End

²⁶¹ **Rose M** op cit 139

²⁶² **Raine's School Foundation Archive** LMA: Acc 1811/1/4

²⁶³ **Ibid** Acc 1811/15/68

²⁶⁴ **Letter from Kay to Lefevre** 21 September 1838, PRO MH 32/50, quoted Brundage A 1978 op cit 50

²⁶⁵ **Stedman Jones, G** 1971 op cit Chapter 5 The Development of the Casual Labour Market in East London 99-126

²⁶⁶ **London Medical Directories 1845-1883.** Lists of London practitioners. London. copies WIL

Road and to the French Hospital, also medical officer to Whitechapel Union. Moved to 7 Philadelphia Place, Hackney Rd in LMD 1848. By 1854, described as Senior Medical Officer to the Union.

John Liddle. LMD entry in 1845, address at 88, Leman Street, Goodman's Fields. General practitioner, MRCSE Sept 21 1827, LAC Sept 7 1826. Surgeon to the Scottish Hospital and Surgeon to the Asylum for Destitute Sailors, Well Street Hackney. Later moved to 4 Alie Place, Goodman's Fields.

A letter in Tower Hamlets Archives dated 26 February 1976 from Mr Nurse (archivist?) to Dr N S Galbraith, Area Medical Officer, responding to a request for information, notes the following²⁶⁷:

Dr John Liddle was the first Medical Officer of Health to the Whitechapel Board of Works. He was appointed in 1856 and resigned "by reason of his advanced age" in 1883: he was about 77 years old. I enclose a copy of the minutes of the Whitechapel Board of Works for December 27th 1883, which record his retirement. The East London Observer for December 29th 1883, p6 reported the meeting and reported some of the speeches on the occasion. Among them was a Mr Ilsley who said:

Dr Liddle was not only a singularly able officer but a very independent one; and looking back on his useful career Dr Liddle had the satisfaction of knowing that he had established his reputation as an eminent sanitary authority reflecting honour on the district which he served. It was more than fifty years since Dr Liddle began as a medical officer in Whitechapel.

There are copies of most of his reports to the Board of Works in the Local History Library; and I enclose a cutting from the Metropolitan for 6th September 1873, which reported on one of them.

Brief details of his qualifications are given in the medical directories held by the Guildhall Library. From these it appears that he received his licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries in 1826 and became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1827. He trained at the London Hospital and Paris and was at one time surgeon at the Scott Hospital (presumably the Royal Scottish Corporation Hospital, now at King Street, W C 2).

During his periods as Medical Officer of Health he lived at 8 Campbell Terrace, Bow Road, Bromley St Leonard; this address was renumbered as 80 Bow Road in 1875 and

²⁶⁷ **Letter from THA Archivist, Mr Nurse to Dr Galbraith, Medical Officer of Health, City and East London Area Health Authority 26 February 1976 THA Personal Files**

the house is still standing, between Tomlins Grove and Campbell Road. The 1871 census returns for this address, which we have on microfilm, give his age as 65 and London as his place of birth. He lived with his wife Mary and two servants. I regret I do not know the date of his birth.

Liddle would have been about 31 years old when the Union formed. He developed, like many of his contemporaries, a taste for the collection of statistics.²⁶⁸

John Anningson. LMD entry 1845, practising as a general practitioner at 152 Whitechapel Road. MRCSE May 25 1838, LSA 1839. No longer in practice by 1854.

James Forster. His obituary appeared in the LMD for 1846. Died 25 March 1845 Practised at Mount Place, Whitechapel.

Mr Forster was born in Paignton, Devon in the year 1813. Served an apprenticeship to Mr Herbert Hill in Ashburton, Devon. Studied at Guy's Hospital and commenced as general practitioner in 1841 at Mount Place after having obtained the diplomas of the College of Surgeons and Apothecaries Society. He was appointed parochial surgeon of the Whitechapel Union (vacant by the death of his partner the late Mr Reed) which he continued to attend until his last illness which was an attack of fever.

James Parkinson (1755-1824) Doctor, radical political activist, geologist and author of *The Shaking Palsy* (1817) the first description of his eponymous disease, Parkinson is the subject of several biographies, including a comprehensive study by Morris published posthumously in 1989.²⁶⁹ Parkinson's work in the parish of Shoreditch was notable for his reorganisation of the workhouse wards in 1813-14 to form separate fever wards, the first in London, Morris believes, and his interest in the administration of the lunacy laws. He was a prolific political pamphleteer between 1793 to 1795, attacking Burke and the tyranny of King and state. Summoned to give evidence to Pitt and others at the Pop Gun Plot Inquisition in 1794, he soon after cut down his political activities. Some of his co-activists were transported. He turned his attention to fossils and medicine, publishing on gout and general medical topics. He was a Trustee of the Poor in Shoreditch from 1799

²⁶⁸ Liddle spoke about Whitechapel to the **Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts** (First Report of the Commission PP 1844 (572) XVII Q 5669-81).

²⁶⁹ The three most recent English language studies of Parkinson's life are **Gardner-Thorpe C** 1987 *James Parkinson 1755-1824 Exeter Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital*; **Morris A D** 1989 (edited by F Clifford Rose) *James Parkinson: His Life and Times* Boston Birkhauser and **Roberts S** 1997 *James Parkinson 1755-1824: from Apothecary to General Practitioner*. London RSM Press

to his death and contributor to numerous local charities, including a Dissenters' school, the Hoxton Academy, though a member of the established church himself. There are memorials to him in St Leonard's Hospital, the old Workhouse Infirmary and in St Leonard's Parish Church.

John Warburton MD

Warburton inherited the proprietorship of Whitmore House and Bethnal Green Asylums from his notorious father Thomas Warburton. He was born into considerable wealth but spent much of his life winning the reputation and respect that had eluded his father. His obituary contained an address by the President of the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society, Dr W F Chambers, given at one of the regular meetings of the Society on March 2nd, 1846.²⁷⁰ He was born in Middlesex, educated Caius, Cambridge MB 1815, licence 1820, Fellow 1821. Elected Censor of the College of Physicians in 1824. Chambers said:

Born and used in competency and grew up and lived and died in opulence, presenting throughout an eminent example of youth unallured by wealth into idleness or vice but spent in due cultivation of his mind and faculties so that besides possessing himself of the ordinary education and accomplishments of an English gentleman he became a considerable proficient in mathematical science, which the high degree he took at Cambridge sufficiently testifies....In his long life [he had a] due share of the embarrassment which such cases present to the physician [cases requiring legal evidence of insanity]....Acquitted himself blamelessly but with unimpeachable uprightness and honesty.

In short he always appears to me to be of that class we happily can enumerate so many in our ranks who without any great brilliancy of career contribute largely to the sustenance of the character of this country for sound and sober good sense and the highest moral and intellectual purity.

The rather snooty comments about Warburton's lack of brilliance and stolid good sense tell us more about Williams and the hierarchy of desirable professional activities within the medical elite of the mid-nineteenth century than his contribution to the reformation of Bethnal Green Asylum. The obituary goes on to say he kept celebrated company at dinner, in particular that he was Abernethy's son-in-law. He was elected Physician to St Luke's Hospital in 1829. Died Puck Crescent, Portland Place 2 June 1845, aged 52. Buried in Highgate Cemetery

Lunacy Commissioners

Samuel Gaskell (1807-1896) Born in Warrington and schooled locally, his medical education was at Manchester Royal Infirmary and Edinburgh. He worked as Resident Medical Officer, Stockport Smallpox Hospital until 1834. He had bookselling and publishing interests in Liverpool and was the brother in law of Mrs Gaskell, the novelist. He became an apothecary at Manchester Royal Infirmary and Lunatic Asylum from 1834-40 then later Medical Superintendent at Lancaster Moor Asylum 1849-48, where he abolished mechanical restraints. An ally and friend of Conolly. He was described as an able, thorough administrator but “excessively diligent,” not a popular trait in inspectors.²⁷¹ He retired from active life after a debilitating street accident in 1865. He was the first of the 'Lancastrians' who subsequently dominated the Commission. Charles Dickens heard him lecture to the Social Science Association in 1860 and thought him most impressive.²⁷²

James William Mylne (1800-1855) Son of James Mylne, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. Educated at Glasgow and Balliol. Barrister, Lincoln's Inn 1827. Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy 1832-45. Co-author with Benjamin Keen of Reports of Cases in the High Court Of Chancery 1832-5, 3 vols, 1834-37 and later with Craig 5 vols, 1837-48.²⁷³

Thomas Turner (1793-1873). Another of the 'Lancastrians' on the Commission, he received his medical education at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals and in Paris. House surgeon, Manchester Royal Infirmary 1817-20, surgeon to the Manchester Deaf and Dumb Institution, then to Manchester Royal Infirmary from 1830. He was a key figure

²⁷⁰ **Lancet** 1846 I (14 March) 293

²⁷¹ **Boase F** op cit Vol I: 1128; **Times** 27 March 1886; obituary in *Journal of Mental Science*.1886 p32

²⁷² **Dickens C** 1860 Of Right Mind, in *All the Year Round* Vol 3, 557-559

²⁷³ **Mellet** 1978 op cit 248

in founding Manchester Medical Schools. Professor of Philosophy, Manchester Royal Institution (1843) FRCS 1843.²⁷⁴

William George Campbell (1810-81). Barrister, Middle Temple 1836. Lunacy Commissioner from 1845-78, then an honorary Commissioner from 1878 to his death.²⁷⁵

Three Middlesex Magistrates

John Adams (1786-1856) Conolly and Adams' alliance between 1839 and 1844 was largely responsible for the adoption of non-restraint as the dominant ideology in the institutional care of lunatics. Of the same generation, similarly endowed with reforming zeal to improve the lot of the less fortunate, they were both of a kind disposition, both inclined to speak their minds when discretion would have served them better and shared broadly similar views on matters of social welfare and social reform. The non-restraint policy at Hanwell depended on their united campaign for its success.²⁷⁶ Their relationship had not begun well however, indeed it is possible that their disastrous first encounter may have influenced the decision not to appoint Conolly to the vacant medical superintendent post at Hanwell when he first applied in 1838 and was rather surprisingly turned down.

The reasons for his rejection have been variously ascribed to his dissenting Unitarianism²⁷⁷ and his radical Whig politics.²⁷⁸ Clitherow, who was in his final year as chairman of the Asylum Committee but coming under increasing pressure from his colleague magistrates Adams and Tulk about his management style, later told Conolly that he had cast his deciding vote against him on the grounds of 'politics'. The politics

²⁷⁴ **Dictionary of National Biography** 1909 op cit Vol XIX: 1287; **Obituary** 1873 *Journal of Mental Science* p 19

²⁷⁵ **Boase** 1892 (1965 ed'n) op cit 535

²⁷⁶ **Suzuki A** 1995 *The Politics and Ideology of Non-Restraint: the Case of Hanwell Asylum*. *Medical history* 39, 1-17

²⁷⁷ **Hunter R, Macalpine I** 1968 Introduction p2-10 of Reprint of J Conolly *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane* 1847 London Churchill

²⁷⁸ **Scull A, Mackenzie, C, Hervey N** 1996 op cit n 95, p293 Conolly wrote to his friend Thomas Coates, Secretary to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge on 26 August 1839 declining an invitation to lecture for the SDUK at Lewes on the grounds that he had been told a year earlier that his progressive politics and support for education of the working classes had cost him the job at Hanwell. SDUK coll., UCL

may have been more personal than Conolly appreciated.²⁷⁹ Clitherow was a Tory but Charles Tulk, who took over from him as Chair of the Asylum Committee later the same year, was a reforming Whig and the leading light of the Swedenborgians in London.²⁸⁰ The Middlesex Magistrates as a group tended to the politically radical rather than the conservative. Conolly was far better qualified for the post than Millingen, who had no experience of working with the insane. The explanation may lie at least in part in Clitherow's respect for Adams' wishes or his notions of loyalty owed to Adams, a fellow Tory and chairman of the bench.

In 1838, Adams had been Chairman of the Middlesex Magistrates for 2 years, attracting much praise for his efficiency in getting through the business and commanding vociferous loyalty from his Bench. They had defended his reappointment against the criticism of the Home Secretary, Lord John Russell, who believed he had the right to appoint someone of his own choosing.²⁸¹ So pleased were his colleagues with his management of their affairs, that the Magistrates sent a deputation to Russell to ask if they could pay their chairman a salary. The Home Secretary declared himself not averse to this request if the individual was someone he had appointed himself and not someone elected by the magistrates, a response that was predicted by the more politically astute members of the bench.²⁸² Adams may well have told his fellow magistrates about his encounter with Conolly when the candidates for the asylum post were known.

In February 1837, Adams stood for election in the Borough of Warwick, a seat made vacant by the inheritance of a viscountcy by the previous member. There were two candidates, the Tory Adams and a Whig, Michael Collins. The Times reported in full the public meeting at which both candidates set out their bids for election.²⁸³ Conolly had long been active in local Whig politics, being a member of the local council in Stratford on Avon and twice elected Mayor in the early 1830's.²⁸⁴ Conolly was not only Collins'

²⁷⁹ Letter from Conolly quoted **Hunter and Macalpine** 1968 op cit p20

²⁸⁰ For **Charles Tulk**, see below and Dictionary of National Biography 1909 vol XIX London, Smith and Elder

²⁸¹ see report in **The Times** 27 May 1836

²⁸² **The Times** 24 February 7b; **The Times** 23 February 1838 7a,b

²⁸³ **The Times** 29 March 1837 3c

²⁸⁴ **Maudsley H** 1866 Memoir of the Late John Conolly. Journal of Mental Science 12, 161

main supporter but made the key speech to champion Collins' cause, in fact the only speech at the meeting that was heard by the public. He was so eloquent in his defence of Collins and his goading of Adams that Collins' supporters were stimulated into rowdy bating of Adams to the point he could not be heard at all except for those who were nearest him. Conolly's main argument in favour of Collins was that he was well known to the assembled crowd and was connected by marriage and by various other interests to the locality. He was opposed to Adams on the basis that he was "entirely unknown to them as a neighbour" and because, "The gentleman came forward to solicit their suffrages on the profession of the most ultra-Toryism that I have ever met with in these times." His speech was meant to be offensive in the accepted political style of course but it was grossly unfair to the politically moderate, reformist Adams and was sufficiently 'rabble-rousing' in tone to stimulate the already excitable crowd to belligerent heckling. Adams was clearly offended by Conolly's accusations. He protested that he was born and educated in the neighbourhood (perhaps stretching the concept of neighbourhood a little) and began to list a dozen reasons why he could not in any way be regarded as "ultra Tory". He approved change "in the established institutions of the Church and State" "to adapt them to the Circumstances of the times." Furthermore, he recognised Dissenters had proper grievances that must be addressed and believed the New Poor Law Act to be iniquitous. If Conolly heard what he said he might have recognised that Adams was nearer to his own views than most of the voters. But Adams' measured and eloquent rebuttal could not be heard above the din of "vehement interruptions". The vote on a show of hands was in fact fairly even and it was decided to hold a ballot. The Times correctly predicted Collins would be the winner on the basis of his extensive local influence.

Surely it is at least possible that this one unsuccessful venture into politics smarted with Adams. When, just a few months later, the candidates for the Asylum physician were discussed by the magistrates, Adams may not have felt very well disposed towards Conolly. On the other hand, Adams was directly involved in Conolly's appointment in 1839,²⁸⁵ having joined the Asylum Committee that year. Perhaps by then the public slight was a distant affair of little moment. Whatever the impact of the election

encounter it did not stop Conolly and Adams developing an alliance which fostered both their ambitions.

Adams was the third and youngest son of Simon Adams of East Haddon, Northamptonshire, the Recorder of Derby, by Sarah, daughter of Cadwallader Coker of Bicester. His father died in 1801, mother in 1833, aged 80.²⁸⁶ Following the family tradition into law he was called to the bar 27 November 1812 and practised on the Midlands Circuit until 1824, when he became Serjeant-at-Law, acquiring his patent of precedence 24 April 1834. Appointed JP on 14 January 1836, he was first appointed Steward of the Coventry bench but quickly joined Middlesex Magistrates in March the same year as their Chairman, a position he held until 1844 when he stood down on being appointed Assistant Judge of the Middlesex Sessions, the post he occupied until his death.

Author of a number of legal texts, his best-known work was *A Treatise on the Principles and Practice of Ejectment and the Remitting Action of Mesne profits* written in 1812, which ran to 4 editions until 1846. A well-known supporter of the principle of trial by jury and an opponent of the more efficient but often unfair summary justice by tribunal system, he was against the establishment of the Central Criminal Court, one of Brougham's initiatives.²⁸⁷ The state of juvenile criminality "had long engaged his anxious attention" as his colleague magistrate Henry Pownall put it²⁸⁸ and it was largely through Adams support for the insertion of a clause in the Parkhurst Prison Act that led to juvenile offenders being sent to a reformatory school rather than a prison style repository.²⁸⁹ His reformist ideas in this area tended to logical extremes. He felt it followed naturally from the educational approach to youthful offending that not only those who had already offended but also juveniles thought to be at risk should also compulsorily be detained for education.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ Suzuki 1995 op cit p8

²⁸⁶ Boase 1892 op cit

²⁸⁷ Adams J 1854 Central Criminal Court Jurisdiction. A letter to the Right Honourable J S Wortley MP. London Benning

²⁸⁸ Adams' Obituary 1856 Gentleman's Magazine 45,195

²⁸⁹ Suzuki 1995 op cit p7

²⁹⁰ Adam's Obituary 1856 op cit

Adams married 3 times, first Eliza Nation, who died 12 August 1812 after giving birth to two sons, second to Jane Maikin of Nottingham in 1817, who died in 1825 and thirdly he married his cousin, Charlotte Priscilla Coker in December 1826. He had six children: two sons by Eliza, John, who was also a lawyer (wrote *The Doctrine of Equity*) and William, a clergyman (author of *The Shadow of the Cross*); both died in 1848. He had another son by Jane and two sons and a daughter by Charlotte. During his later years he lived in Hyde Park Street just north of the park. A nephew, General Adams died at Scutari after the Battle of Inkerman.²⁹¹

The part Adams played in the proselytization of non-restraint is well covered by Suzuki²⁹² and chapters on Conolly and Morison in Scull, Mackenzie and Hervey.²⁹³ The series of 20 or so letters published in the *Lancet* under the name 'A Looker-On' between 1839 and '41, in which Adams vigorously defended the non-restraint system against all criticism, show a dogged determination to win the argument.²⁹⁴ The honour of the Middlesex Magistrates was at stake, the demonstration that they could carry out this "great act of humanity" was undoubtedly important to Adams.²⁹⁵ The campaign was a personal one. The *Lancet* protagonists for non-restraint, even if they did not always agree on its universality of application or the amount of seclusion or alternative personal attention that might be required to manage patients' destructive episodes, wrote as allies in the battle against the reactionary ideas of Morison (physician to the Bethlem and formerly visiting physician to Hanwell) and others who had not yet seen the light. They shared private jokes, which indicate they knew the identity of the 'Looker-On'. Dismissing some minor point in the non-restraint debate in a *Lancet* letter from W.A.F. Browne,²⁹⁶ a crucial ally north of the border, Adams alludes to an article Conolly

²⁹¹ **Ibid** and **Boase** 1892 op cit

²⁹² **Suzuki** 1995 op cit

²⁹³ **Scull A, Mackenzie, C, Hervey N** 1996 op cit chapter 3 A Brilliant career? John Conolly 1794-1866 p48-83 and Chapter 5 Treating the Mad outside the Asylum Walls: Sir Alexander Morison 1779-1866 123-160

²⁹⁴ **A Looker-On. Letters to the Editor of the Lancet** 1839, 1840-41 1: 296-7, 342-5 and others

²⁹⁵ **Preface to the 72nd Report of the Visiting Justices of the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum** 1844 H11/HLL/A8/1

²⁹⁶ **Adams, Conolly and W A F Browne** all wrote at great length on the value of orderliness and regularity of regimes. Browne at Crichton Royal Asylum liked pictures, decorations of all kinds and quite lively entertainments were encouraged, of a kind that would have been considered far too excitatory by

has written on the Scottish nation²⁹⁷ and teases, "Science would be greatly indebted to Dr. Browne if he could favour the public with an article on that subject." There was an affectionate playfulness about some of Adams' letters that is charming.

Morison was never converted to non-restraint, he nurtured an abiding animosity towards Conolly but his close associate Sir Peter Laurie, Chairman of Governors of Bethlem eventually was persuaded. Adams, along with other Middlesex and Surrey magistrates was a governor of Bethlem. He and his colleagues began to make invidious comparisons between the progressive humanitarian regime at Hanwell and the conventional restraint system at Bethlem. Laurie visited Hanwell in December 1839 and was impressed by the wholesale abandonment of restraining chairs but noted that non-restraint could lead to an increased use of seclusion.²⁹⁸ Laurie was an honest sceptic who simply wanted to be convinced. Unlike his physician, Morison, who refused to even consider the notion of non-restraint worthy of investigating, Laurie took the trouble to see for himself although he confessed later that his initial opposition to non-restraint had been influenced by his loyalty to Reverend Francis Tebbutt. This pompous and bigoted chaplain was engaged in July 1839 but almost immediately fell out with Conolly, to whom he was responsible, who had him dismissed a year later.²⁹⁹ The rivalry between Hanwell and Bethlem on this issue was largely a consequence of the personal feud between Conolly and Morison.³⁰⁰ Relationships between the two institutions deteriorated further as the result of a visit by Adams and Tulk to Bethlem on 31 October 1840, when they spotted a man, IDS (John Darby Shelley, a criminal lunatic), confined in iron bars and rings. On this occasion it was Tulk who took the lead in writing to *The Lancet*.³⁰¹ Their observations triggered a request from the Home Secretary to the Governors of Bethlem to set up a special committee to enquire into the treatment of

Conolly (for example **Browne W A F** *What Asylums Were, Are and Ought to Be* see particularly 1837, 176-202; **Conolly J** 1847 *On the Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums*. London Churchill

²⁹⁷ **Lancet** 1840-41 I: 741

²⁹⁸ **Suzuki** 1995 op cit p10, n10

²⁹⁹ Tebbutt appealed against his dismissal, complaining that Conolly was continually pushing his Unitarian views at him and that he entertained notorious and unsavoury Chartists in his residence at Hanwell (Conolly's friends Owen and Pare from Birmingham were two). The magistrates sacked Tebbutt anyway but he had supporters on the Bench and Laurie was one of them. **Hunter and Macalpine** tell the Tebbutt story in Introduction to modern reprint of Conolly *Construction and Government*, op cit; see also **Scull A, Mackenzie, C, Hervey N** 1996 op cit chapter 5 Morison, p151

³⁰⁰ **Scull A, Mackenzie, C, Hervey N** 1996 op cit chapter 5 Morison, p150-153

criminal lunatics. The 'special committee' was two doctors, Mayo and Southey whose report was uncritically bland. The *Lancet*'s editor, Wakley dismissed their findings on the grounds that the pair of them "have never distinguished themselves either in the practice or literature of their profession".³⁰² The episode fizzled out under a torrent of other letters to the *Lancet* for and against non-restraint.

Adams was still rushing to Conolly's aid even after he resigned from the Visiting Justices on his appointment to the Judiciary. The Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy's Report on their visit to Hanwell in 1844 had been critical of the 'no-swap' policy and the inevitable accumulation of incurable cases. Adams wrote a preface to the Visiting Justices next annual report in which he lambasted the Commissioners in characteristic fashion but used arguments that were recognisably Conolly's.³⁰³ He points out that the Act for the establishment of County Lunatic Asylums, 9 Geo IV c40 says that an asylum is for the care and, maintenance of pauper and criminal lunatics but that there is no reference to "curable" or "incurable". He quotes Johnson's Dictionary, "Asylum—a Refuge, a place of retreat and security, Contra-distinguished from a hospital, a place of cure". Bethlem and St Luke's were hospitals, but not Hanwell. He goes on to point out that the Surrey Asylum, opened in 1841 also mainly admitted incurables. The real problem he thought was that the regulations omitted procedures for the rapid admission of recent cases. This was the last contribution Adams made to the debate. After becoming a judge he retained an interest in Hanwell as Treasurer of the Queen Adelaide Fund.³⁰⁴

Adams died on January 10th 1856. Henry Pownall, another close ally on the Asylum Committee who became chairman of the Middlesex Magistrates after Adams, wrote of him "Occasionally he was hasty, sometimes impatient but never vindictive, ever kind and benevolent... He had a comprehensive well-stocked mind, a retentive memory

³⁰¹ *Lancet* 1840-41 Letter 10 November 1840 p296

³⁰² *Lancet* 1840-41 1: Editorial 10 November 1840

³⁰³ Preface to 72nd Report of Visiting Justices to Hanwell 1844 op cit

³⁰⁴ The Queen Adelaide Fund for assisting the resettlement of pauper lunatics after discharge from Hanwell was established by Clitherow and others. The Archive series in LMA is H11/H11/QAF and QAF... The Fund still exists to promote rehabilitation and personal grants for individuals in Greater London discharged from Psychiatric units.

which enabled him to arrive at quick conclusions and to state facts readily".³⁰⁵ It seems doubtful that Conolly would be the internationally well known figure he became if it were not for the energetic enthusiasm of John Adams.

Charles Augustus Tulk (1786-1849)

The second most 'visible' of the Middlesex Magistrates to support the non-restraint policy, Charles Augustus Tulk, was less prone to intemperate outbursts than Adams, wrote shorter, less impassioned letters and indeed comes across as a rather more measured person altogether. His views on the ideal prison regime however were grimly austere and like Adams, he was a keen advocate of efficiency and tight control both of the regime and of budgets, which he believed could be effected only by centralised direct management of an institution.

An active proponent of the creation of the new Asylum, Tulk was a leading light of the Prison Committee. The unpopular government prison inspectors wanted the magistrates to adopt the 'solitary' system in the House of Correction at Coldbath Fields but the bench was satisfied with their rival 'silent' system. The rather public acrimony that attended the debate on this issue, largely intended by the Middlesex Magistrates to irritate the Home Secretary, ended in a compromise when Tulk declared that they would devise a system which had the advantages of both.³⁰⁶ The *Times* report of this exchange does not describe exactly what this new system meant in practice.³⁰⁷ We can deduce from Pownall's pamphlet that during the day, prisoners associated silently while engaged in work on the treadmill, picking coir, stone breaking or other tedious labour but slept separately in individual cells at night.³⁰⁸ Pownall claimed this was economical of staff, good for maintaining order and prevented moral contagion of the young by the older offender.

Tulk had the advantages of a man of independent means who could afford the time to indulge in 'good works' and somewhat eccentric causes if they took his fancy. His

³⁰⁵ Adam's Obituary op cit

³⁰⁶ Suzuki 1995 op cit 1-17

³⁰⁷ The Times 1838 23 February 7a

³⁰⁸ Comment by Pownall 1850 quoted by Suzuki 1995 op cit p7

father, John Tulk, who had a personal fortune, had been a member of the Theosophical Society and founded a group to study the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Swedenborg was a Swedish theologian who believed he had personally received the true revelation of Christian doctrine and founded the New Church, a spiritual rather than a physical entity.³⁰⁹ Charles Tulk was one of the founders and for eleven years, with breaks, Chairman of the London Swedenborgians. It is said that he did not attend public worship, he and his family said prayers, but only the Lord's Prayer, at home. He became a friend of John Flaxman and a patron of William Blake.³¹⁰ His addresses to the Swedenborg Society are described by their historian as "masterpieces of eloquence in the idiom of his day...though we might think them long and wordy today".³¹¹

Liberal in some things, he was in favour for example of Catholic emancipation and strongly averse to capital punishment, and was one of the proprietors of the newly established University College London. Perhaps he knew Conolly between 1828 and 1831 when Conolly spent three frustrating years as the first Professor of Medicine at that new institution.³¹² It seems possible that he was aware that Conolly had left his university post rather suddenly and unpredictably. Might that have led a cautious man to be a little reluctant to engage Conolly as the Asylum's superintendent?

Educated at Westminster, where he became Captain of School, and at Trinity College, Cambridge,³¹³ he studied at the Bar but never practised, presumably having no need. He devoted much of his time to Whig politics, was a close friend of Joseph Hume, the

³⁰⁹ The Swedenborg Society's current publications are available in Esperanto, Italian, Tamil and Zulu. **Encyclopaedia Americana** (Vol 26, 1978 Danbury Americana Corporation) describes three different organisations derived from the original societies in the UK and USA, two are broadly "Congregational", one is episcopal in structure, all have dropped out of fashion in the 20th century. Of Swedenborg's theology, it notes that he "had a liberalising influence on religious dogma". He espoused notions of heaven and hell as states rather than places and had a unifying, global notion of the Trinity which spiritualised the rather concrete polytheistic tangle of the many-sided deity which preoccupied the established churches. It was possible and common for Swedenborgians to belong to other non-Catholic Protestant churches in the early years when Tulk was Chairman

³¹⁰ Tulk's activities outside the Asylum Committee are described in **Hume M** 1890 A Brief Sketch of the Life and Religious Opinions of Charles Augustus Tulk, London James Spiers; **Deck R H** 1977 New Light on C A Tulk, Blake's 19th Century Patron Studies in Romanticism 16, 217-236; **The Times** 1840 24 July 7c

³¹¹ **Griffith F G** 1960 The Swedenborg Society 1810-1960 London The Swedenborg Society Inc.

³¹² **Maudsley H** 1866 A Memoir of the late John Conolly MD Journal of Mental Science XII 151-174

³¹³ **Dictionary of National Biography** 1909 Vol XIX London Smith Elder

radical MP, becoming an MP himself in 1820-26 for Sudbury, Suffolk and later for Poole between 1835 and 37.³¹⁴ It was at the end of this second spell in parliament that he began to take an interest in the running of the Asylum, joining the Committee in 1838 and taking the Chair after Clitherow's resignation in 1839 until 1847. Since Tulk was less given to letter writing than Adams it is not clear whether he was an acquiescent supporter of Adams or a backroom driver. He wrote to the *Lancet* in 1840 about his disagreement with the Chairman of the Governors of Bethlem, Sir Peter Laurie³¹⁵ and repeatedly defended the non-restraint system in his introductions to the Asylum Annual Reports.³¹⁶

Tulk married Susannah Hart in 1807, who died in 1824 after bearing 12 children, of whom 7 survived. He died in 1849.

John George Henry Pownall (1792-1880)

Pownall was more closely associated with the planning and building of the Middlesex prisons and with the second Middlesex asylum at Colney Hatch than with Hanwell.³¹⁷ He was nevertheless an important supporter of non-restraint, the 'third man' with Adams and Tulk who provided the engine of social reform of the Middlesex Magistrates. During his opening address at Colney Hatch in 1851, Pownall exhorted "May the conductors of this Asylum surpass the happiest results which have followed the labours of their brethren at Hanwell", "No hand or foot will be bound here."³¹⁸ His speech reflected the newly accepted wisdom of non-restraint but his early support for his two colleagues is not surprising, if we can take the rest of his life's work as an indicator.

The epithet 'the great and the good' could have been devised for Pownall. He chaired the Middlesex Bench for over a quarter of a century, taking over from Tulk in 1844 and finally retiring in 1870 but spent much time and money on "numerous philanthropic and

³¹⁴ Suzuki 1995 op cit p1

³¹⁵ Tulk C A Letter to The Lancet 10 November 1840 Vol 1 1839-40 p296

³¹⁶ Annual Reports of the Asylum Committee of Visitors series H11/HLL/A5, 1840-45

³¹⁷ Hunter R, Macalpine I Psychiatry for the Poor: Colney Hatch Asylum 1851: Friern Hospital 1973. 1874 London Dawsons p24

³¹⁸ Ibid p24

charitable societies”.³¹⁹ His origins go unremarked in Boase and in his obituary in *The Times*, except for a note that he was the son of one John Pownall.³²⁰ The family had extensive land and property in West Middlesex.³²¹ He does not seem to have pursued a career—and he could not, surely, have spared the time. He was an active initiator and/or supporter of the following charities and institutions:

Co-founder of Exeter Hall, London 1831

A founder of *The Record Newspaper* 1828

Member of the Bible Society

Member of the Church Missionary Society

Member of the Mendicity Society

Member of the Anti-Slavery Society —moved a motion at a national meeting conducted under the Presidency of Wilberforce in July 1829 “That from and after January 1st 1830 every slave born within the King’s dominions shall be free”³²²

Established with Peter Hervé the National Benevolent Institution

Philanthropic donations and support for the erection of numerous schools and churches in West Middlesex, especially in Hounslow, Twickenham and Turnham Green

Knight of St John of Jerusalem 1859

Member of the Corporation for the Sons of the Clergy

Member of Committee of the Scientific and Literary Society of Staines³²³

His Tory political ambitions were unsuccessful. A “staunch supporter of Conservative principles”³²⁴ he contested Finsbury in 1834 and Middlesex in 1837, on the latter occasion opposing Tulk’s Whig friend, Joseph Hume the sitting member – neither got elected. After that he concentrated his efforts on the Bench and took a lifelong interest in prisons and prison reform. He achieved some distinction for his timely intervention to defeat the plot to spring the Fenian prisoners Burke and Casey out of the Middlesex

³¹⁹ Boase F 1892 op cit

³²⁰ Pownall’s Obituary *The Times* 9 April 1880 7d

³²¹ Historical Notes on H Pownall, J F Pownall and F H Pownall, dated 18 January 1960 LMA Uncatalogued Miscellany

³²² Boase 1892 op cit from Sir John Stephens’ *Anti-Slavery Recollections* 1854.(date of 1850 given in Obituary)

³²³ LMA Doc Acc 809/5L

³²⁴ *Times Obituary* op cit

House of Detention in Clerkenwell.³²⁵ His colleagues had a full-length portrait of him painted by Eden Upton Eddis to hang in the Clerkenwell Sessions House (said now to be in the Guildhall) and on his retirement in 1870 gave him a dessert service costing 500gns.³²⁶ By special resolution they elected him a permanent member of the Visiting Justices of Prisons. He lived for ten years after retirement and carried on with his charitable work, notably as Treasurer of the Corporation for the Sons of the Clergy. He continued to attend Sessions until 1878.

Prisons were Pownall's obsession rather like the Asylum was Adams'. His 1850 pamphlet defending the County's high expenditure on prisons and prisoners reveals his high Tory liberal but utilitarian approach to the penal system.³²⁷ Treating prisoners well, providing good food, warmth, cleanliness and occupation in silent association prevented contagious prison fevers that rapidly spread to surrounding neighbourhoods. Keeping prisoners on remand prior to trial and convicted felons in separate institutions prevented the contagion of moral degeneracy from the recidivist to the novice. The regime of silent association by day and separation by night was good for order and economical of staff to oversee the prisoners. Pownall would have preferred to remove the prisons outside London, to a rural location some twelve miles outside the City. His Utopian airy institution would provide a hundred-acre farm for useful hard labour. Pownall's institution sounds just like—an asylum! Suzuki points out the parallels and associations between the Asylums and Prisons in the reformist vision of the mid-nineteenth century.³²⁸ Asylum attendants and turnkeys were recruited from the same pool and officers readily moved from one type of institution to another. Where daily regime and order are the vehicle for containment, moral rehabilitation and education of the soul, the skills to create and sustain the regime become more important than differentiating the individuals for whom the institution is designed.

³²⁵ The **Fenian Conspiracy of 1867** is commemorated on a large plaque in the church of St James Clerkenwell, across the Square from the Sessions House and a few yards from the House of Detention. The explosion caused by two barrels of gunpowder blew out the north wall of the prison and killed six people in houses nearby. 600 families were affected by injuries, or were displaced or lost property as a result of the explosion. The relief fund committee set up to provide assistance included Pownall.

³²⁶ **Boase** 1892 op cit

³²⁷ **Pownall H** 1850 Observations on the Expenses of the County of Middlesex on the Prisons and their Management H11/HLL/Y2/3

³²⁸ **Suzuki** 1995 op cit p9 n46

Pownall married Amelia Waterhouse, who predeceased him by 20 years. From the scant notes made in 1960 by a descendant, it seems he had at least one son, John Fish Pownall and a daughter Anne. He lived at Spring Grove, Heston, serving as a JP in the Brentford Division until moving to 20 Ladbroke Grove in 1853. He moved again in 1867 to 63, Russell Square and kept a country home at Woodland Lodge, Totton, Hampshire. He moved to the Holborn Division of the Bench in 1868.³²⁹ He died at 63 Russell Square on 8 April 1880.

Pownall's son, John Fish Pownall practised as a lawyer at 19, Lincoln's Inn and also served as a Middlesex JP. A signed copy of his published notes and commentary on the 1845 Lunatics Act, a practical handbook for practitioners, with the Treasurer Morrison's name inscribed survives as part of the Hanwell Archive.³³⁰ J F Pownall lived at the same addresses as Henry Pownall.³³¹

³²⁹ **Historical Notes Pownalls** 1960 op cit

³³⁰ **Pownall JF** 1845 The Pauper Lunatic Asylum Act (8 & 9 Vict. C126) London Benning H11/HLL/Y2/3

³³¹ The **Middlesex County Surveyor of Bridges** was one Frederick Hyde Pownall an architect. It is likely that he was a first cousin of J F Pownall and nephew to Henry but he may have been another son. There were several descendant architects with the name Pownall. **Historical Notes** 1960 op cit

Appendix D: Statistical tables

Table D1: Population, East London Parishes, 1801-1851³³²

Parish	Acreage	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
Clerkenwell	380	23,400	30,500	39100	47600	56800	64800
Old Artillery	5.3	1400	1400	1500	1400	1600	2200
St Luke	237	26900	32500	40900	46700	49800	54100
Stoke Newington	638	1500	2100	2700	3500	4500	4900
StA/StGHolborn	120	22200	24000	26500	27300	29000	32000
Saffron Hill++	32	7800	7500	9300	10000	9400	8700
Bethnal Green	755	22300	33600	45700	62000	74100	90200
Bow	565	2100	2300	2300	3400	4600	7000
Bromley	610	1700	3600	4400	4800	6200	11800
Hackney	3299	12700	16800	22500	31000	37800	53600
Holy Trinity	4	600	600	700	500	600	600
Limehouse+Rat.	244	4700	7400	9800	15700	21000	24600
Nort Folgate. Lib.	10	1700	1700	1900	1900	1700	1800
Poplar	1158	4500	7800	12200	16900	20300	28400
St Botolph + E	34	6200	5300	6400	3500	3600	4200
Smithfield							
St George East	244	21200	26900	32500	38500	41300	48400
St Katherine by	14	2700	2700	2700	100	100	500
Tower ³³³							
Shadwell	68	8800	9900	9600	9600	10100	11700
Shoreditch ³³⁴	648	34800	43900	5300	68600	83400	109300
Spitalfields	73	15100	16200	18600	17900	20400	21000
Stepney	830	20800	27500	36900	51000	63700	80200
Wapping	41	5900	3300	3100	3600	4100	4500
Whitechapel	170	23700	27600	29400	30800	34100	37800

³³² Source: **VCH Middlesex** Vol II 1970 Institute of Historical Research, London, Dawsons. Appendix IV 1801-1901. Definition of a 'civil parish' in 1801, "an area for which a separate poor rate is or can be made or for which a separate overseer is or can be appointed". Returns were made by the overseers of the poor, enumeration over a period of days, from 1801 and 1831, then by appointed registration officers on a single day, from 1841-1901

³³³ Population reduction in St Katherine in 1831 caused by clearance for building St Katherine's Dock, 1821-1831.

³³⁴ Shoreditch population peak in 1861 (129400)

Table D2: Population, England and Wales, East London, Greater London and the County of London 1801-1881 (figures in 10,000s)

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Census Pop'n England & Wales ³³⁵	890	1020	1200	1390	1590	1790	2010	2270	2600
Pop'n East London (RD)	41.0	47.3	54.2	62.4	66.6	80.7	93.5	100.0	108.0
Pop'n County of London	95.0	114	138	166	195	336	281	326	383
Pop'n Greater London	110	130	160	190	220	270	320	390	480
Pop'n East London (VCH) ³³⁶	27.1	33.5	36.4	44.0	57.8	68.4			

**Table D3: Expenditure on Poor Relief and Maintenance of Insane Paupers
1840- 80³³⁷**

Year ended	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880
Poor Relief Expenditure £m's Eng & Wales	3.74	4.07	3.77	5.17	4.47
Pauper Lunatic Maintenance £m's Eng & Wales			0.42	0.72	0.99

³³⁵ Population figures for England and Wales, East London Registration Districts (RD), County of London (inner London) and Greater London (includes outer London) are from **Grytzal KG** 1969 County of London Population Changes 1801-1901. Lund, Royal Lund University Press, Appendix Tables 1.2 and 1.3

³³⁶ Population of East London Parishes (VCH) from **Institute of Historical Research** 1970 VCH Middlesex Vol II London, Dawson's, Appendix IV 1801-1901

³³⁷ Figures for England and Wales from **Williams K** 1981 op cit Statistical appendix 169 table 4.6 and for East London Unions, Annual Reports of the Poor Law Commission, Poor Law Board, Local Government Board and Commissioners in Lunacy

Table D4 Insane Pauper Rate per 10,000 Population in Middlesex and England and Wales, 1807-1880 ³³⁸

1 Jan ³³⁸	1807	1819	1829	1836	1844	1855	1860	1870	1880
Insane Pauper Rate per 10,000 population England and Wales	0.25	0.58	1.3	0.9	1.3	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.7
Insane Pauper Rate per 10,000 population Middlesex	-	-	0.36	0.48	0.52	0.8	1.2	1.9	2.3

Table D5 Insane Paupers as a Proportion of Chargeable Paupers 1807-1880, East London and England and Wales ³³⁷

1 January	1844	1855	1860	1870	1880
% Paupers classified insane England & Wales	1.7%	3.1%	4.5%	5.3%	8.8%
% Paupers classified insane East London Unions	1.3%	2.7%	4.9%	5.0%	12%

³³⁸ Years specified are those for which figures are available, the same used by Scull 1993 op cit p337 Table 8

Table D6 Admissions to St Luke's Hospital from East London Parishes, 1801-1850³³⁹

Parish	1801-10	1811-20	1821-30	1831-40	1841-50
Bethnal Green	36	35	27	31	31
Clerkenwell	41	35	33	-	
Hackney	22	16	10	12	7
Limehouse	4	6	2	6	2
Poplar	0	1	3	6	3
Shadwell	12	12	6	-	-
Spitalfields	9	7	9	12	8
Stepney	10	20	13	14	4
St George in the East	24	15	17	19	18
St Leonard Shoreditch	80	78	49	90	54
St Luke Old Street	66	53	60	-	-
Wapping	11	6	1	0	1
Whitechapel	31	21	8	24	8

³³⁹ Information supplied by R Leon, Archivist St Luke's Hospital Woodside